

LETTERS & DIALOGUES

ON

THE LORD'S SUPPER:

SHOWING,

The Obligation upon ALL Christians to communicate;
The Qualifications required; The proper Exercise
at a Communion Table; and the consequent Duties of Communicants.

BY THE
REV. JOSEPH ROBERTSON,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL—EDINBURGH.

SANCTIFY YOURSELVES, AND COME WITH ME TO THE SACRIFICE.

I SAM. XV. 5.

SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST JESUS.

I COR. XV. 2.

Entered in Stationers-Hall.

THIRD EDITION.

EDINBURGH Printed:

SOLD BY M. GRAY, W. LAING, JOHN GUTHRIE,
AND P. CAIRNS,—EDINBURGH,

AND

J. DUNCAN JUN.—GLASGOW.

M, DCC, XCIV.



Going to the HOUSE of GOD on a Communion Sabbath.

OUR Redeemer bids us go
Singing to his courts below ;
There his sweet enliv'ning face
Shall adorn the Holy place.
Here his glory he'll display,
Here he says, " I'll ever stay : " .
Who shall here his grace withstand,
If the blessing he command?
And the blessing here shall rest,
For his faithful word is past :
" Zion's food I'll ever bless,
" And her children will increase.
" When her priests my terrors sound
" These like two-edg'd sword shall wound,
" When my mercy they reveal
" This like Gilead's balm shall heal ;
" Sacred fulness I'll impart
" To the empty, longing heart ;
" This, in ev'ry age bestow'd,
" Shall secure a church for God.
" Still triumphant grace shall reign,
" Still shall Satan's pow'r decline ;
" Blow the storm, or shine the sun,
" Still my purpos'd love shall run."
Lord, the promise we receive ;
Thou hast said, and we believe
Even shall thy word obtain,
Full of faith we shout. Amen

TO THE
MANAGERS, ELDERS, & MEMBERS
OF THE
Congregation of the New Chapel,
LEITH-WYND,
THE FOLLOWING
LETTERS AND DALOGUES
IN TOKEN
OF GRATITUDE AND SINCERE AFFECTION
ARE
HUMBLY DEDICATED
BY
THEIR AFFECTIONATE MINISTER.

My dearly beloved Hearers,

I LONG for your salvation. My heart's desire and prayer to God for you all is that you may be saved. Bound by the most sacred ties to watch for your souls, as

one who must give an account to God, I have endeavoured by manifestation of the truth, to commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. For your benefit in *particular* these Letters and Dialogues were composed. The substance of them was preached in your hearing. To not a few I hope the doctrines and admonitions contained in them were than useful. That by the blessing of God you might have a second benefit, they are now put into your hands. Gratitude for the many marks of your affection and firm adherence to me, induce me to dedicate them to you. Accept of this testimony of my gratitude and sincere affection.

Whatever be their reception with the world, I indulge the fond hope that they will be acceptable to you. "May they prove exceeding useful." The inclination which on all occasions you have shown to listen to my public and private instruction, emboldens me to hope that this small book will not be neglected by you. In it I have delivered my sentiments with freedom. These I hope will be found correspondent to the Oracles of Truth, and to the Standards of the Church of Scotland. It is farther hoped, that nothing is said tending to offend against the generation of the righteous. Should the profligate character be offended, he is asked, if it is not better now to be reprov'd for sin, and informed of duty, when mercy may be obtained; than either he to perish in his iniquities, or 'his blood to be required at my 'hands.' And let him farther remember, that his immortal soul is in danger; consequently that it is

a matter of no small importance which is under discussion. He may now neglect religion, but it will certainly prove bitterness in death. And how near that moment is, none can tell. Diseases surround. Death approaches. I beseech thee, O wicked man, by the mercies of God, prepare to meet it. Now believe in the name of the Son of God. Now consider your ways and your doings, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. Delay not the important work of salvation.

Suffer me, my dear hearers, to entreat you all seriously to lay to heart the things which belong to your everlasting peace. Be not deceived. Know for certain, that the unbelieving cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Believe then in the Son of God. And believing, be careful to maintain good works. The faith of the gospel purifies the heart, and leads to abound in all the fruits of righteousness. It induces to walk worthy of your honorable vocation as Christians,—to have a respect to all the commandments of God,—to be regular in your attendance upon the preaching of the gospel,—regular in worshipping God in your families, and careful of the morals and the instruction of your children and servants. The faith of the gospel will also teach to venerate the holy and dreadful name of God;—to keep his ordinances, and sanctify his Sabbath;—to set the Lord always before you;—in every company, in every place, in every relation, and in every transaction of life.

Ye fond parents, nurse up your children for

God. Both by precept and example train them up in the way they should go, and when they are old they shall not depart from it.

Ye masters do the same thing unto your servants. You are in the stead of parents to them, and if you bereave them of spiritual instruction, they are bereaved indeed. Beware they rise not up in judgment to condemn you. Nay rather let them now behold the lessons of sobriety and of holiness written in your conduct, and cause them to hear religious instruction from your lips.

O ye young, great are the dangers to which you are exposed. O seek the Lord in the days of your youth. Give him your hearts. He alone can keep you from all evil. He alone can guard you from the snares, temptations and fascinating pleasures of a wicked world. He alone can make you truly happy in youth, in riper years, in old age, in life, in death, and through eternity.

Finally brethren, be ye all of one mind in the great work of holiness. Let your actions show that you are true Christians. In a congregational capacity live together in love and in peace. Cultivate an acquaintance with each other. Aid and support each other in your temporal interest. In this as well as in spiritual concerns *let brotherly love continue*. Live in peace with all men. Avoid a turbulent spirit. Brethren let me have joy of you in the Lord. Show to all your order and the steadfastness of your faith. Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only: grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Give evidence that the
Lord

Lord is among us. For when the gospel has its effect upon the manners of men, reproachers are put to silence, and full evidence afforded, that the work is of God, and therefore that it cannot come to nought.

“ Now, may the Lord bless you and keep you
 “ from all evil, may he cause his face to shine up-
 “ on you, and give you peace. May his blessing
 “ which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow, rest
 “ and remain with you. May you increase in
 “ knowledge, in faith and in every grace. May
 “ he guide you in every path of life. Grant you
 “ many domestic blessings, and many of the con-
 “ solations of faith to cheer your hearts amid *the*
 “ *afflictions of humanity*. May the animating hope
 “ of glory support your minds in the gloomy hour
 “ of death. And may you meet with acceptance
 “ in the general judgment. May none of you then
 “ witness against me for unfaithfulness. Nor may
 “ your minister witness against any of you be-
 “ cause of your unbelief and your obstinate re-
 “ jection of the gospel, but may he have many
 “ for a crown of joy, and rejoicing in that day.
 “ And may *we all* meet in heaven to sing the
 “ praises of the Lamb who was slain, and hath re-
 “ deemed us to God by his blood.”

These are and shall be the sincere and ardent prayers of

Your affectionate Minister, and

Servant in the Gospel,

EDINBURGH, }
 March 19. 1794. }

JOSEPH ROBERTSON.

LINES BY A MOURNING MOTHER ON THE
DEATH OF AN INFANT SON.

NO sculptur'd marble here to speak thy worth,
Nor letter'd stone to call thy mem'ry forth;
No high-raisd bust of monumental show,
Nor the fine sketch of emblematic woe:
But real grief these plaintive lines impart,
Drawn from the tablet of an aching heart,
For that lov'd form that's now for ever fled,
And mould'ring lies configur'd among the dead.
That lily-white, and rosy-blushing face,
Is now for worms a prey to sad disgrace:
Ah! view him now, and what he late hath been,
And mourn the fatal consequence of sin.
The op'ning blossom just appear'd in sight,
Gain'd the fond eye, and added to delight.
The fairest flow'rs that deck'd the verdant field,
Did not more beauty nor more fragrance yield.
But sore afflictions did at once invade,
And o'er his lustre cast a dreadful shade.
Though young, and smiling fair, death would not stay,
But, unrelenting, summon'd him away.
Be this, my soul, devoutly understood,
And learn the end of all created good.

Hail happy Babe! thy blessed spirit's gone
To put, I trust, thy Savior's glories on.
Now with thy God acceptance thou hast found,
And with immortal happiness art crown'd.
Translated from a world of sin and strife,
From all the ills and miseries of life,
No heart-distressing care thou e'er wilt know,
Nor sorrows that await us here below.
Escap'd from snares, unwary youth fall in,
And ere temptation led thee on to sin,
The parent's sigh will never heave thy breast,
Nor dire disease approach thy sacred rest.

I mourn thy absence with the keenest pain,
 Yet would not wish to have thee here again;
 For, O! what trials in a future day,
 Might have been thine, had longer been thy stay!
 May I but meet thee in yon azure skies,
 When the last trump shall bid my body rise,
 And fondly clasp thee to my breast once more,
 With thee, my Savior, and my God adore;
 Calmly I'd wait till death should set me free,
 And waft my longing soul to heav'n and thee.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD*.

Jesus said unto them, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. — There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old.

MARK x. 14.

ISAIAH lxx. 20.

HERE, drooping by thy lifeless side,
 Pensive, retir'd with grief o'erborne!
 Lovely in death, my darling pride,
 Thee, the long weeping Muse shall mourn.
 Farewel! thou dearest in my heart,
 Whom neither tears nor prayers could save;
 'Tis death's redoubled pain to part,
 And leave such beauty in the grave.
 Strong was thy wisdom, wond'rous child!
 Active and bright its early ray:
 Thy temper grateful, winning, mild;
 And love rul'd all the smiling day.
 Ah me! that once such sweetness grac'd!
 Those winning smiles, the angel-form,

* The death of a son of 3 years and about 6 months, the night before the conclusion of the printing of this book, induced the author to insert the two following hymns. Other parents may have similar feelings: and also similar afflictions.

Corruption's greedy train shall waste—

The mould'ring dust, the feasting worm.

That tongue, whose gentle prattling blest ;

That hand whose tender touch could charm ;

No more with kisses shall be prest,

No more my fondling bosom warm.

Where thy lov'd sight could once rejoice.

Now, forc'd thine absence to sustain,

Mine ear waits list'ning for thy voice ;

I turn and seek thy glimpse in vain.

By night my eyes the search repeat,

Sad to the glittering skies they roll :

" Tell me," I say, " the happy seat ;

" Say, where resides the blissful soul !"

Yet with bright hopes in distant view,

My faith, instructed by the rod,

Bids the false joys of earth adieu,

And bows before the sovereign God.

Happy for thee, so soon, so well,

To 'scape the woes which life annoy :

To part, with few sad tales to tell,

With no black grief to damp thy joy.

Till the last hour of general doom,

Kind angels guard the precious trust ;

Lock the cold chambers of his tomb,

And timely wake his slumb'ring dust.

That day shall bring thee to my sight ;

Thy presence shall my joys restore :

Fill me, thou thought, with vast delight,

When death shall never part us more.

A PARENT'S GRIEF ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

2 SAM. xii. 22, 23.

AND is he gone!—my much lov'd child no more!
Sleeps he in death who lately gave me joy!

Ah yes, he's gone!—and let me now deplore
My dear (and oh how dear!) departed boy.

Oft have I mourn'd, and oft have told my grief
To Him who gives to all their life and breath,

For who could tell, but Heaven would send relief?
I pray'd while yet he liv'd—but now he sleeps in death!

Ah yes, my child is gone!—to grieve how vain!
If weeping could avail, I'd weep a flood,

Nor prayers nor tears can bring my child again,
Could I dissolve my eyes in tears of blood.

I'll chide my griefs—no more my sorrows flow—
Or, if I mourn, let meek submission hear,

My heav'nly Father sent the mortal blow,
Nor should an earthly parent think it too severe.

Why should I weep? and weep these tears in vain?
I too shall shortly quit this mortal scene;

In death my child and I shall meet again;
Short is the space, and but a span between.

Why should I weep? To die is richest gain:
Would I recall my child from heav'nly bliss?

'Tis death that shuts the avenues of pain.
Departed saints are blest—and dwell where Jesus is.

Oh! let me grieve at nought but cursed sin!
'Twas sin that gave to tyrant Death his pow'r;

Yes, let me new repentant griefs begin,
And learn to bless affliction's painful hour.

My child is gone!—and still these tears arise—
I'll think of him, who was the "Man of Grief:"

He wept, and dy'd, and reigns above the skies,
He reigns, and loves, and gives me sweet and blest
relief.

INDEX.

<i>A LETTER to a friend concerning the obligation to commemorate the death of Jesus</i>	Page 1
<i>A second Letter to a Friend on the same subject,</i>	11.
<i>Dialogue between Fiducius a Minister, and Contemnus an ungodly Person requesting admittance to the Lord's Ta- ble,</i>	18.
<i>Dialogue between Andronicus a Minister, and Elandor a religious young person desiring to partake of the Holy Sa- crament,</i>	30.
<i>Dialogue between Theophilus a Minister, and Zaccheus an aged Person requesting admittance for the first time to the Lord's Supper,</i>	43.
<i>A Letter from Fiducius to Junia, giving an account of the reformation of Contemnus, and of his admission to the Lord's Table,</i>	52.
<i>Dialogue between Epenetus a Minister, and Elenora a young Lady desiring to commemorate the Death of Christ,</i>	58.
<i>Dialogue second between the same persons,</i>	68.
<i>A Letter to a Lady, endeavouring to describe the proper ex- ercises of devotion in commemorating the Death of Jesus,</i>	78.
<i>Dialogue between Elevatus returning from the Table of the Lord rejoicing, and Depressus returning aged,</i>	89.
<i>Dialogue between Benevolus a Minister, and Circumspectus enquiring how he ought to walk after communicating,</i>	105.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND,

CONCERNING

The Obligation to commemorate the DEATH of
JESUS.

This do in remembrance of Me.

LUKE xxii. 19.

Dear FRIEND,

BENEVOLENCE and true piety are inseparable companions. Of this sacred history affords many proofs. In every age the man of piety hath shewn an ardent concern for the best interests of mankind. The venerable Moses was an eminent instance of this. He ardently loved his countrymen. He labored to reclaim them, and to guide them in the ways of peace. In the evening of life he represented unto them, in the most lively colors, the beneficial effects of piety, and the sad effects of vice. And, after enumerating the direful calamities which were to descend upon the rebellious, he exclaimed, saying, 'Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.'

The good man considers every action in life in close connection with death. The best acquaintance with earthly things is a just conception of their vain and changing nature. The remembrance of our latter end is a strong incentive to holiness. It is mournful that men think so seldom on death. The reflection of a moment will shew its importance. Death closes the eyes upon the present scene. Death breaks off the most favorite purposes. At his command the schemes to accumulate wealth,

to acquire honor, and to gratify ambition must be laid aside. The refined pursuits of literature also cease in death. The learned and the unlearned mingle in the inactive tomb. Death separates intimate friends and dear relatives. In that separation many a pang is given to the human heart. Death dissolves the connection between the soul and the body. But, viewed as connected with eternity, who can describe the horrors of death to the wicked? They are eternally separated from the means of grace. 'As the tree falleth so will it ly.' 'The wicked are driven away in their wickedness'—driven to the tribunal of God, to receive according to their ungodly deeds;—to receive the punishment due to the violation of God's laws, and the neglect of religious ordinances;—to reap the fruits of blasphemous oaths, and of the profanation of holy sabbaths;—to be punished for disobedience to parents, and contempt of superiors. There the assassin, the adulterer, the false swearer, and the covetous man who is an idolater, shall be rewarded according to their works. But of all offenders, tenfold vengeance awaits the hypocrite, 'who having a form of godliness, and denying the power thereof,' labors to impose even upon God. In vain, human language struggles to express the direful punishment connected with these crimes. And when reason herself acknowledges this, O how melancholy the consideration, that reasonable creatures proceed in that line of conduct which exposes them to the displeasure of the Most High!

I was led to these reflections, my friend, by witnessing the sad end of a wicked man, upon hearing his bitter lamentations over his ungodly conduct, and particularly because he had lived even to old age *without commemorating the death of Christ*. This circumstance reminded me that I had not answered your last letter, in which you requested my sentiments concerning the extent of the obligation to that duty.

The general strain of your letter indicates a mind in

no small hesitation. This is particularly evident from the interrogation: "Does it appear that all Christians, when arrived at maturity, are bound to communicate?" Moved with an ardent desire for the spiritual improvement, and actuated with the purest affection towards my friend, I shall endeavor to answer this important question.

Numerous are the arguments which prove, "That ALL Christians are bound to commemorate the Death of Jesus."

The reasonable nature of man, proves the universal obligation to religion. Though the human mind is become depraved, yet reason approves of religion. In every situation in which man hath been found, in some form or another, he hath shown an inclination to acknowledge and to serve a superior Being. So deeply is this sentiment written on the human heart, that wherever man hath fixed his habitation, temples have been reared, and religious assemblies held. Human darkness and depravity have, indeed, in no instance displayed their existence more clearly, than in the article of religion. While this circumstance, however, hath shown the darkness and the depravity of man, it hath also shown that a principle is implanted in man, which calls upon the creature to adore the Creator. Can any thing be more equitable? Are all indebted to God for existence, and for continued preservation? Then all are bound to venerate and to serve him. Obedience is the duty of a dependent. Man is dependent upon God: To him men owe their various powers; therefore all these should be devoted to his service. Can any sentiment be more consonant to uncorrupted reason? Can any thing be a greater disgrace to man than irreligion? If any line of conduct whatever, can prove a disgrace to a reasonable creature, it certainly is rebellion against God.

Reason herself enforces a *profession* of religion. It is a fatal mistake of the multitude, foolishly to ima-

gine that mankind are at liberty to assume a profession of religion, or not, at pleasure. Nothing can be more absurd: For since man is formed and supported by God, he must be accountable to him, and is bound, by the most sacred ties, to revere his glorious perfections. No proposition is more obviously true than this, That creation gives a right to possession; and also, That possession gives a right to disposal. May not God do with his own as he pleaseth? Now in what manner God hath disposed of man in this respect, is sufficiently evident, both from the notices of nature, and from the voice of revelation. In the accents of majestic authority, he hath commanded him, that 'whether he eat or drink, or what-soever he doeth, to do all to the glory of God.' And it is universally acknowledged, that God is glorified by a genuine profession of religion, and a correspondent conversation. By having a conversation becoming the man and the christian; laboring neither to offend God, nor to lead others to offend him. Such conduct is produced by the influence of the divine Spirit, and such conduct glorifies our Father who is in heaven. Nor can any man neglect a profession of religion, without disgracing his reasonable nature.

But you know, my friend, that baptism also constitutes an obligation to assume a profession of religion, and, by consequence, to celebrate the death of Jesus. We who dwell in a christian country were, in our infant days, dedicated to God in baptism. By this gate we entered the visible church. That solemn transaction implies an engagement to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and to be the servants of the living God. Hence, if this solemn vow is not renewed by a personal dedication to the service of God, by sitting down at his table, it is in action renounced. The nature of this transaction is such, that we must either renew it, or we renounce it. For it was done when we could not act for ourselves. Reason had not then begun to exert her intelligent vigor. Therefore if that solemn

solemn vow is not renewed when we come to mature years, this is declaring by our actions, which speak the most unequivocal language, "Our parents dedicated us to God in our infancy, but we disapprove of their conduct; therefore we will totally revoke that solemn transaction, and walk on in the way of our own hearts." This conduct is both unreasonable and ungrateful. It may justly be asked, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise?' Is it not mournful and degrading to humanity, that any should renounce the service of the living God, and embrace the service of the prince of darkness! Why should any intelligent creature thus act, and by a criminal negligence show, that he renounces his baptism?

But the authority of the eternal King is interposed in this matter. The sacred Oracles declare, that every son of faith hath a respect to all the commandments of God. Since, therefore, it is a leading feature in the character of a good man, that he hath a respect to ALL the commandments of God; it follows that no good man, when opportunity is afforded, can neglect to obey the dying command of Jesus, without staining his character. Nor is the will of God unknown in this matter. 'Do this in remembrance of me,' is the statute of heaven. A command neither ambiguous nor indeterminate, but expressed in the most plain and positive language. Nor was this enjoined merely upon his immediate disciples; but also upon all his succeeding followers. For the death of Christ is to be shown forth 'until he come again.' The existence of the gospel, and the existence of this ordinance shall be of equal duration. And who dare deny that Jesus is our eternal Judge, our Lawgiver, and our King?

Hence, all are unquestionably bound to obey this command, and the neglect thereof exposes to his awful displeasure. Every man who hears the gospel is under indispensable obligations to believe in the name of the Son of God; and every one who believes in Jesus is

qualified to communicate. Oh how terrible then to be exposed to the wrath of the almighty King ! Inspiration saith, ‘where the word of a king is, there is power.’ But what is the word or the wrath of any one, nay, of all the kings of the earth, compared to the displeasure of the King of Kings, and the Lord of lords ? ‘His hand shall find out all his enemies.’ When he sits to judge he will say, ‘Bring forth those men who would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me.’ And sure a continued neglect to commemorate the death of Jesus, when living under the gospel, is an absolute contempt of his authority, and a rejection of him as our Lord and King.

This sentiment is strongly written in the injunctions concerning the sacrament of the ancient church. The man who neglected to keep the passover was cut off from the society of Israel ;—deemed unworthy to associate with men, because acting such an irrational part towards God ;—excluded from the privileges of that commonwealth, because a contemner of the statutes of the King and Lord of Israel. The express appointment of this ordinance, the design thereof, and its various ceremonies, are narrated in the twelfth chapter of Exodus. In the ninth of Numbers we are informed that upon certain men being defiled with a dead body, that they could not keep the passover on the specified day, the Lord spake unto the children of Israel saying, ‘If any man of you, or of your posterity, shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it. But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from his people, because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.’ This passage is so nervous and so explicit, as to require no explanation. And permit me to add, that this passage
claims

claims the most serious consideration of all those who habitually neglect to keep our New Testament passover. So exactly correspondent were the sentiments of the early christians, that in several ancient synods it was decreed, that " whoever did not communicate every third Lord's day at least, should be cut off from the church."

It also appears, that the Lord's supper commenced in the passover. The whole ritual of Moses was an infant dispensation. Paul says to the New Testament Church concerning the Lord's supper, ' Christ our passover was sacrificed for us.' Their passover represented a Savior who was yet to come, and whose blood was yet to be shed: But our passover is a representation of Christ who was already sacrificed for us. Blood accompanied the first passover, because the blood of atonement was not then shed: but there is no blood attending the Lord's supper, because the blood of atonement hath already streamed in order to sprinkle many nations.

But the Author, and the Object of both sacraments are one. The external symbols are indeed in many respects different, yet the materials of the Lord's supper were obviously taken from the passover. In the celebration of the passover, it was usual for the master of each family to take the unleavened bread and to break it, and to give it to his household, saying, ' This is the bread of affliction which our fathers did eat in Egypt.' This bread our Lord took, and break it in the celebration of his last passover; and by saying unto his disciples, ' This is my body which is broken for you,' he converted the ancient Jewish custom of the master of the family into a New Testament command to all his followers. The master of every family in Israel also took the cup, and blessed it, and gave it to his family to drink, calling it *the cup of the hymn*, because they immediately after sung an hymn and concluded the solemn service. This cup our Lord took in his

his last passover, 'and having blessed it and given thanks
' he gave it to his disciples, saying, this is the cup of
' the New Testament in my blood, shed for the remission
' of sins, drink ye all of it ;' and by so saying he took the
cup in the Jewish passover, and made it the cup of the
Lord's supper. By his authority he constituted it the
cup of the New Testament hymn, which the church
in all succeeding ages shall sing with joyful hearts to
Jesus for redeeming love.

Is it not in allusion to this ceremony, and in allusion
to the exercise of praise so suitable at a communion
table, that the sacrament of the Lord's supper is deno-
minated 'the thanksgiving?' And had not Paul this
custom in view when he said, 'The cup of blessing which
' we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of
' Christ ; and the bread which we break, is it not the
' communion of the body of Christ ?'

'There is also a peculiar fitness in the symbols of
bread and wine to represent gospel blessings. In al-
most every country and clime, bread and wine are to
be found. 'Bread is the staff of life and strengtheneth
' the heart of man.' Christ is the spiritual life of the
faithful, and he said, 'I am the living bread who
' came down from heaven ; if any man eat of this bread
' he shall live for ever ; and the bread that I will give
' is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'
Wine cheareth the heart of man. Christ is also the
consolation of Israel. Hunger and thirst are the most
powerful sensations of man ; the allaying of these con-
stitute his chief natural felicity. With singular pro-
priety, therefore, that provision which is made for fa-
mishing souls in the gospel-feast is represented by bread
and wine. But as an actual participation of food is
absolutely necessary in order to natural support, and as
an actual participation of the passover was absolutely
necessary in order to save from the sword of the de-
stroying angel, so an actual reception of Christ by faith
is

is absolutely necessary in order to save from the wrath to come.

Singular indeed is the light which the passover spreads upon the Lord's supper. Indistinct and obscure will be our conceptions of the nature of the Lord's supper without a proper acquaintance with the nature of the passover. The Old Testament ceremonies are fraught with gospel blessings. The gospel was preached unto the Jews as well as unto the Christians. Yes, more than temporal blessings hung upon the branches of these ancient trees. Their shadowy leaves were full of fruit for the healing of the nations.

It is written that the external splendor of the second temple was inferior to the temple of Solomon, yet it was said, 'the glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former.' In a similar manner, though the external splendor of this latter sacrament is less than the former, yet it excels both in spiritual representation, and in glory. It was the saying of the benevolent friend of men, 'This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.' In all things the pre-eminence belongs to the christian dispensation. Does not the substance far excel the shadow? That sacrament, my friend, only commemorated the rescue of Abram's sons from Pharaoh's bondage: but this the rescue of Adam's sons from Satan's slavery. That was only the type of him who was to come: but this the memorial of him who 'was dead and behold he is alive, and lives for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death.' That commemorated the sprinkling of the blood of the selected lamb of the flock, this commemorates the shedding of the blood of the chosen Lamb of God. That was by Moses, this was by Christ. That was the sacrament of the Old, this, the sacrament of the New dispensation. Therefore may we not conclude, that in as far as this ordinance excels that, of so much greater punishment are they counted worthy, who despise and neglect this,
than

than those were exposed to who despised and neglected that. No situation, nor accident exempted from a *total* neglect of the passover. May we not then boldly aver that no situation or accident can excuse an *habitual* neglect of the Lord's supper !

The command of Jesus is both express and also universal. It includes all the disciples of Jesus ; therefore, that man who neglects it, declares to all that he is not a disciple of Jesus. The observance of the passover was enjoined upon all the congregation of Israel, and all those who neglected it were excluded their society. The observation of the gospel solemnity is also enjoined upon all christians, and all those who neglect it exclude themselves from the society of the faithful. Not however that it is argued in behalf of *promiscuous* admission ; but certainly all enjoying the light of the gospel, ought so to live as that they may have a right to partake of the solemn ordinance. Or in other words all ought to believe on the name, of the Son of God, that so, having true faith, they may in a worthy and beneficial manner eat and drink at his sacred table.

But I have no leisure longer to pursue this subject at present. Perhaps I may produce more evidence on a future occasion. Wishing you much domestic and spiritual comfort, I am, Dear Friend, Yours, &c.

‘ DO this in remembrance of me !’ It is the voice of
 “ my Lord ; and lest I should think it was directed
 “ only to his twelve disciples, or the christians of the
 “ first ages, Saint Paul assures me, that this ordinance
 “ is to run parallel with time ; and by it the church
 “ is to *shew forth Christ's death till he come*. Consider,
 “ O my soul ! Is the Lord at hand ? Will he *surely*
 “ *come quickly* ? How shall I answer it on that day,
 “ that I have neglected so express a command. ‘ A com-
 “ mand not couched in ambiguous and uncertain terms,
 “ but delivered in as plain and positive expressions as
 “ any in the Bible.’

Dr. EARLE.

A SE-

A SECOND
LETTER TO A FRIEND,
ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatever I command you.

JOHN XV. 14.

Dear FRIEND,

AMONG the various pleasures resembling those of heaven, of which the faithful are permitted to taste on earth, that of christian conversation is none of the least. In the hour of religious conversation the holy soul often experiences a large portion of joys similar to those of heaven. Pouring out his spiritual complaint unto his brother, his heart is both eased and comforted. Speaking of the wonders of redeeming love, his heart burns with ardent love towards God and towards all men. Comparing the dealings of the Lord with his soul, together with the dealings of the Lord towards the soul of his brother, he learns to suppress every murmur. By mutual conversation also they improve in knowledge and edify one another. But the pleasures connected with spiritual conversations exceed description. In the degenerate day the godly, as the fearers of the Lord in the days of the prophet Malachi, 'speak often one to another.' Nor will the Lord be less gracious to his people in any age than in that declining day, of whom it is added, 'And the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them who feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.'

And

‘ And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.’

It is to be lamented, that in this degenerate day this important duty is so much neglected by the godly. They are not only become ashamed of Christ before the men of the world, but also either slow or ashamed to speak of him to one another. Sure there is an endless store of rational, improving, and spiritual conversation afforded by the experience of the saints, and by the wonderful scheme of mercy. And to obtain an accurate conception of the various ways in which God leads his people, and an extensive acquaintance with the doctrines of the gospel, must be of all the numerous pleasures of conversation the most important. ‘ The scriptures make wise unto salvation.’ It is matter of strong consolation to your friend that the art of writing affords the means of carrying on the pleasant and the edifying conversation, interrupted by distance of place. Our last conversation of this kind was respecting the extent of the obligation to commemorate the death of Jesus. Then I mentioned that it appeared to be binding upon all christians, from a consideration of our rational nature,—from being baptised,—and also from the dying command of Christ.

The obligation to this beneficial duty may farther be shown, from the kindness of Christ manifested towards the human race. The special use of this ordinance in the church, is to commemorate the mighty works of Jesus in behalf of forlorn men. Therefore, should all neglect it, what would be the melancholy consequence? Had it not been for the observation of this solemnity, it is difficult to ascertain what might have been the fate of christianity long before this advanced period of society. In this view its importance is great. How base to neglect to celebrate the great goodness of Christ ! Hath the Eternal Son of God left the throne

of glory to dwell with men? Did he condescend to obey the law,—to endure temptation,—to submit to poverty, to reproach, to persecution, to agonies, and to death for men? Hath he done so much in their behalf? And hath he commanded them with his dying breath to keep this feast in remembrance of him, until he come again? Who then that hath obtained proper conceptions of these things, would live in a habitual disregard of that ordinance? It admits of no doubt, that every man who hath felt the operation of the divine Spirit, and hath opportunity, yet lives in the neglect of commemorating the death of Christ, exceedingly errs. How inconsistent to be a real believer, yet neglect this reasonable service! What! a genuine disciple of Jesus, and not commemorate his death!—A partaker of like precious faith with God's elect, and not constrained by the love of Christ to obey his dying command! What! to have obtained redemption through the precious blood of Christ: and not cause his name to be remembered in all generations! Is this their kindness to their best, and most generous friend? Do they thus requite the Lord? Certainly these things ought not so to be. Never was an instance of benevolence or generosity exhibited, equal to that of Jesus towards men; therefore, to disobey his *last* command, is so base and ungrateful that language affords no name sufficiently odious for such conduct. The unerring record declares, that 'greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.' But the love of Christ ascended higher, for he died for *enemies*.

The danger of neglecting also enforces the duty of communicating. The sentiment of true Wisdom in this matter is, that it implies an inconsistency of character to be a genuine christian, yet to live in the neglect of this pleasing and honorable service. This endangers the reputation: It is also a crime that God hath threatened severely to punish. If he threatens severely to punish the man who dares to profane this holy

ordinance, will he not also severely punish that man who lives in the continued neglect of his royal mandate? Paternal chastisements are keenly felt. But upon offending children paternal chastisements will fall. For of his children God says, ' You only have I known ' of all the families of the earth, therefore, will I punish you for your iniquities.' From this threatening of the Father of all, it appears sufficiently evident, that he who neglects to commemorate the dying love of Jesus, greatly injures his own spiritual comfort. May he be surprised though his spiritual afflictions abound!—though corruptions continue vigorous!—though temptations prevail!—though the fascinating charms of the world ensnare!—though his consolation be small, and his holiness slowly advance! But ought not every action in life to have a reference to death? And say, my friend, what a bitter ingredient in the cup of death is a neglect of this duty. When the world is retiring, and death is approaching, nature fainting, and eternity advancing in full view, what a painful sensation, to recollect that a life of many years hath been spent, without a public and personal dedication to the service of the Most High. Oh what an insupportable consideration! The soul revolts, and shrinks back from such a thought. O that the neglecter of this duty would calmly reflect upon this, and now prevent such an agonizing thought from rending his soul amid the agonies of death, and in the view of approaching judgment.

Farther; the vast advantages that the worthy receiver may reap, call upon the children of faith to approach a communion-table. Baptism introduces into the house of God, the Lord's supper nourishes when we are there. The body cannot long sustain devoid of nourishment, neither can the soul long experience happiness devoid of spiritual nourishment. The one is fed of the earth, the other is fed of heaven. It will readily be granted that the soul is nourished by all those means which God hath ordained for that purpose; this however

however, is particularly the case in the celebration of the Lord's supper. There, by visible symbols, are exhibited the mercy, the love, and the peace of the Eternal Three who dwell on high. In rich profusion the blessings of salvation are stored. Eternity itself hath been employed in preparing materials to replenish this table. It is furnished from heaven. Men eat food superior to that of angels. The Son of the Highest took not on him the nature of angels: but he took upon him the nature of men. He died to give his flesh for the life of the world. Upon this sacrifice the faithful are invited to feast. And while they feast, glorious are the consequences. 'The Lord giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength;'—communicates strength to mortify the deeds of the flesh, to vanquish corruption, and to rise superior to depravity. The various graces of the divine Spirit are enlivened and invigorated. The weak in faith are established, and the fearful in heart made strong. Hope is animated with the glorious prospects of futurity. The cold heart warmed, and love enflamed to an unusual height. The wandering obtain direction. The sorrowful are made glad. The grovelling affections have been elevated and set on things above. Believers have seen the King of glory in his beauty, and have obtained a sight of the land that is afar off. God hath shown unto them what is the exceeding greatness of his love and mercy in the Beloved. The righteous have their fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the eternal Spirit. Here, also the saints hold sweet communion together, both as an earnest and a foretaste of heavenly felicity. In joyful accents they sing, saying, 'We being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.' In this cup, all distinctions and all animosities ought to be forgotten. 'Behold,' O ye surrounding angels, 'how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!'

Here all orders of men meet together and mingle without the least distinction of rank. And in heaven the faithful are gathered from every country, and from every clime, and sit down together, to sing one song, and to praise one Savior. I hope my friend is no stranger to these joys. Nay, is he not about to exclaim, that language cannot unfold the one half of the great blessings enjoyed at a communion table. Oh, Sir, is there not in a variety of respects a resemblance between the pleasant work of communicating, and the glorious work of heaven. This is true with respect to the society, the pleasures, and the holy employments of that glorious place. Hail, happy day, when the righteous shall come to the marriage-supper of the Lamb! Glorious day! when all the redeemed shall arrive from their wanderings in the mansions of glory!—when they come to feast upon the ever-ripe fruit of the tree of life;—to have all their tears wiped away from their eyes;—to have all their mental powers refined and perfected, and fully gratified;—to see Jesus face to face;—to be ‘perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of ‘God to all eternity.’ Thrice ‘blessed are all they who ‘shall eat bread in the kingdom of heaven.’

O my dear friend, may we encourage the animating hope of one day mingling in that holy society, and sharing in these unsullied pleasures, and shall these light afflictions which we are now called to endure, in due time work out for us a far more, even an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory? Shall such experience the high honor to be arrayed in that fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints? Shall we have crowns of glory placed upon our heads, and palms of victory put into our hands? Shall our sorrowful voices join the melodious notes of countless hosts, to celebrate the praises of God and of the Lamb? What! Shall we be permitted to sing with a loud voice, saying, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive ‘power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and
‘honor

'honor, and glory, and blessing, for he was slain, and
'hath redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every
'kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hath
'made us unto our God kings and priests.' O joy un-
speakable and full of glory ! Be it then our care to con-
tinue firm and steadfast unto the end. Let us endure,
as seeing him who is invisible ;—as those who enter-
tain such glorious hopes ;—hopes and pleasures which
the human mind can neither fully conceive ; nor hu-
man language fully unfold.

Glancing back on the field which we have now tra-
versed, may I not ask my friend, if the nature of man
as a rational being,—the dedication to God in baptism,
—the express command of Christ,—his kindness towards
the human race,—the danger connected with the ne-
glect of this duty,—and the beneficial consequences of
worthy communicating, may I not ask, if all these do
not in the most forcible language teach, That all
christians are bound to commemorate the death of Je-
sus. Be it then our care never to neglect, but eagerly
to embrace every opportunity of testifying our grati-
tude and love to our dear Redeemer. Were I not ful-
ly convinced of your exquisite delight in religious sub-
jects, I should greatly dread being chided in your next
for this long epistle. Ardently wishing that you may
increase in every heavenly grace, and experience strong
consolation in the faith of Jesus, I am,

Dear Friend, yours, &c.

"Blush, O my soul, and be ashamed at so inconsist-
ent a conduct ! as to neglect to commemorate the
death of Christ. Either Christ is thy prince or he is
not. *If not*, profess thyself an infidel, and renounce
thy baptism. *If he be*, obey him in all that he re-
quires ; and either believe that he has not made it
thy duty to remember him, or yield a cheerful sub-
jection in this, as well as other instances."

Dr. EARLE.

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

FIDUCIUS a Minister, and CONTEMNUS an ungodly person requesting admittance to the Lord's Table.

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination : How much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind.

PROV. xxi. 27.

FIDUCIUS. **I** AM happy, Contemnus, to see you at my house. I hope your family are all well.

CONTEMNUS. I suppose, Sir, you know the cause of my waiting upon you to-night. This evening being appointed for the purpose of conversing with those who intend to come to the ensuing sacrament—This cause hath brought me here.

FID. Communicating is important work and ought to be weighed with particular care. "A bold venturing upon an ordinance is but the sacrifice of fools*." Pray why are you requesting admittance to this holy ordinance?

CON. Why: to obey the command of my Savior, and to save my soul.

FID. No doubt it is the command of our Savior, therefore all are bound to yield obedience thereto. I am however much afraid, Sir, you are greatly mistaken when you imagine that communicating will save you soul. Many, foolishly supposing this, have only hardened themselves in sin, and at last have gone down to the grave with a lie in their right hand.

CON. Why, Sir, do you say so, when we are told that
Christ

* Dr. Owen.

Christ died to save sinners, and this ordinance is kept in remembrance of his death?

FID. But, though in remembrance of his death, it was not designed to save sinners. Dear Sir, you give me reason to suspect that you have erroneous conceptions of this matter. For though Christ died to save the chief of sinners, yet this ordinance hath nothing meritorious in order to atone for sin. Nor was it——

CON. Excuse my interruption: I must inform you that I am not alone in this opinion. Last night I heard one say in a public company, that, "Though he was none of those flaming professors who turn the world upside down about religion, yet he thanked God he made all right by sitting down at the table of the Lord." This saying induced me also to ask a mitigation to that ordinance.

FID. Ah, Contemnus, you constrain me to conclude, that your views of this solemn work are entirely wrong. I must be free to tell you, that, when I saw you here to night, a fond hope overspread my soul, that you was about to become a sober man, and had abandoned your former courses. I now however perceive quite the reverse. Still you are ignorant of the very first principles of religion, and of the solemn nature of the Lord's supper. Now, with sorrow of heart, I learn, that what has brought you here is only an impious sentence dropped from one of your ungodly companions. Like him you suppose that partaking of the sacrament will atone for your ungodly conduct, that so you may with redoubled vigor indulge in sin, and serve the devil and your own lusts.

CON. Sir, remember that a minister ought to speak charitably.

FID. Ah, but my friend would not wish me to exercise charity at the expence of fidelity. Unfaithfulness in a messenger is peculiarly odious. 'It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.' And sure that charity is falsely so called which is not accompanied

ed with fidelity. What is genuine charity but loving and doing good to our neighbour? And that never can be doing him good, which is deceiving him. Now pray, Sir, consider what an erroneous idea it is to suppose, that communicating will atone for sin. Were you properly acquainted with your Bible, you would there learn, that this ordinance was prepared for the friends of Jesus, and for them alone. Nor should any——

CON. What, Sir, I must again interrupt you, will you say that I am not a friend of Christ? Who would not love the Savior of the world?

FID. I have only to answer this question in the words of Jesus, 'If ye love me,' said he, 'keep my commandments.' Loving him and rebelling against him are quite inconsistent. Obedience is the unerring proof of friendship to Jesus. And you will excuse me, if, in compassion to your soul, I calmly ask, can you pretend that you love Jesus? Are there any of the traces of genuine love in your conduct? What! are ignorance and profanity evidences of friendship to Christ? Is taking the glorious and dreadful name of God in vain, yielding obedience to the divine command? Where is such an injunction to be found? Not among the oracles of truth; nor I may add in any code of human laws.

Farther, does not the third commandment in express words prohibit such conduct? Nor can you say, that drinking to intoxication is keeping the commands of Christ? What a shocking idea to suppose that Jesus, who was perfectly holy, enjoined a reasonable creature to throw away his reason in the gratification of a brutal appetite;—enjoined him to benumb his mental powers, and to inflame his depraved passions to such a degree, that his conduct has more the resemblance of a malignant spirit, than that of a reasonable being? What! did ever such a command issue forth from the Holy One of Israel! Nay, on the contrary, hath he not given the most express commandment to act a different
part:

part : and also denounced the most severe punishment upon such notorious offenders ?

CON. Sir, your manner of speech approaches to rudeness, if not worse, and entirely exhausts my patience. Remember I am a gentleman. This is in reality no less than denominating me both a swearer and a drunkard. Who could narrate such things of me ?

FID. Oh, Contemnus, how strong is the infatuation of sin ? Why attempt, either to conceal or to deny what is too obvious to all ? Can you evade the charge ? Can your own conscience deny the melancholy fact ?

CON. Ah, Sir, can you say that though a man should sometimes mistake and become intoxicated ; or should sometimes pronounce an oath, that therefore on that account he was to be esteemed a drunkard or a swearer ?

FID. Contemnus, I shall not at present enter into the inquiry, how often a person must be intoxicated before he be called a drunkard, nor how often he must swear before he be called a swearer, but of one thing I am certain, even this, that both are expressly forbidden by the law of God. And I am equally certain that no good man will indulge in either. Farther ; since it is only good men who have a right to commemorate the death of Christ, I must, in discharge of the trust committed unto me by the Lord, refuse you admittance to that solemn feast.

CON. What, Sir, would you be so cruel as to hinder me from taking the sacrament, in order to have my sins taken away ? If I am a great sinner, I have the greater necessity to go there.

FID. Far, far be it from me to oppose the salvation of your soul ; I most ardently pray for it, and would do any thing in my power to accomplish such a desirable end. I must however in duty inform you, that your ideas of this solemn service are altogether wrong. This opinion you seem to have adopted over the intoxicating

toxicating cup, from the mouth of an ungodly companion. The sacred record knows no such doctrine. Its uniform doctrine is, that there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus Christ. If your opinion was just, then it would be to make a Savior of the solemn ordinance. To make the performance of a duty the Savior of the soul. Nay, more, a singular kind of Savior indeed. Not a Savior from sin: but a Savior in sin. One that purchased indulgence to commit iniquity. Such, unquestionably would be the fact, if one might indulge in all manner of debauchery and profanity, and, by sitting down at the table of the Lord, remove all that contamination and guilt. Nor hath such purification any other aim than to prepare to plunge afresh into the mire of pollution. This would be not only to convert the ordinance of the Lord's supper into a meritorious Savior: but also into a minister of sin. In this view how could it deserve the name of an *holy* sacrament? Farther; in this ordinance is represented the most intimate communion between Christ and the holy soul. But can Christ have fellowship with a son of Belial? Can he have communion with a profane sinner, still going on in the practice of his abominations? In this solemn ordinance the most affecting view of a crucified Savior is exhibited, that so the tears of penitence and of holy joy may stream from a broken and a contrite heart. But can he grieve for sin whose chief pleasure is to indulge therein? Can he feel holy joy who rejoiceth only in iniquity? Here also is exhibited the most ample display ever given to mortals of the holiness and glorious excellence of God. Are then, I ask, superstition, ignorance, profanity, and daring presumption proper dispositions to bring to this holy ordinance?

Does not the very nature of things evince how ridiculous it would be to behold a man of such a character at a communion table! What! to-day in the company

company of the drunkard, joining in his wanton song, irreligious and obscene conversation, and to-morrow in the company of the people of God, joining in their solemn service and religious devotions ! To-day partaking of the cup of devils, which the cup of the drunkard certainly is, and to-morrow partaking of the cup of the Lord ? O how horrible the guilt to approach the sacred table, as it were staggering with the cup of intoxication in the hand ! O how impious, that the lips which were scarcely closed from swearing should approach a communion table, crying, Lord ! Lord ! Well may he say to such, ‘ Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and ‘ do not the things which I say ? ’ Reason herself blushes at such conduct. It was the expressive saying of a godly divine : “ To harbor with us, and bring along “ with us to the commemoration of the death of Christ “ unmortified lusts and corruptions, such as we do not “ continually and sincerely endeavor to kill and mortify, is to come and *upbraid Christ with his murderer,* “ instead of obtaining any spiritual advantage ; what “ can such poor souls expect ! ”

Nay more, Sir, by your catechism you was taught in your youthful days, that knowledge was necessary to discern the Lord’s body, faith to feed upon him, also repentance, love, and new obedience. Can you deny that these things are necessary in order to acceptable communicating ? Now, Sir, will you say that thou hast knowledge to discern the spiritual nature of this solemn service, when by thine own acknowledgment thou supposest partaking thereof will make atonement for thy sins. This is not knowledge proper for discerning the Lord’s body. Know for certain, that it is none of the ends of this sacrament that it may atone for the sins of men, in order that they may more than ever indulge in all manner of vice. This would be rendering it an unholy ordinance indeed ; using it to quite another purpose than ever was intended by the Holy One. His intention was, that his friends in observing

ving this service might bear up the remembrance of his death and sufferings in their behalf;—that in so doing, the various graces implanted in their souls might be called forth into lively exercise;—that, by virtue derived from Christ, they may grow in grace, and be nourished up unto eternal life;—that they may experience the gracious manifestations of divine love and obtain blissful foretastes of endless felicity;—that they may know in enjoyment what is the exceeding greatness of God's love.

CON. Dear Sir, this is exactly what I was formerly saying, obtaining salvation by communicating. Have you not just now said that at the table of the Lord men obtain a glorious foretaste of eternal felicity?

FID. True, I have so said. But what kind of men are they who enjoy such favors? Have you not been also told that they are the friends of Jesus. That these alone have a right to go there, and that these alone will obtain the blessing represented by this spiritual institution? Nay more, have you not been informed that in the nature of things, holy persons only can experience these exquisite and refined enjoyments? I have also appealed to your catechism, which I suppose you learned in your youth, in confirmation of what was averred. Nor do I contend that this is any more than human authority. It might have been added, that the church not only teaches, that a proper acquaintance with the nature of this ordinance, but also the existence of genuine faith, is necessary in order to beneficial communicating. And since all men have not faith, so all men are not proper guests for that sacred feast. Nor can it be denied, that wherever true faith exists in the heart it will manifest itself in the life. Holy actions are the fruits of genuine faith. Hence every profane swearer, every notorious drunkard, every ignorant and profane person proves by his actions that he hath no faith; and consequently that he hath no right to come to this holy

ly sacrament. Nor can you deny, Sir, that such is your present character.

But if possible, to convince your own mind of this sad fact, permit me to ask you, Do you know any thing of the nature of faith? Have you any conception of the origin from whence it flows? Inspiration says, faith cometh by hearing the word of truth. This hearing must either come by the reading of the scriptures, or the preaching of the gospel. But can you say that you are one of those who do not forsake the assembling of themselves in the house of God? When was you in the church? Seldom I see you there. How then can faith exist in your soul, when you neglect the only appointed means for producing it? Can the rush grow without mire? Can faith be produced without hearing? The very seeds of genuine faith are the reports of divine truth; therefore no true faith can exist where the sacred reports are unheard. And it is reasonable to conclude, that if you neglect to hear the gospel, you will also neglect to read the word of God. Of this your gross ignorance is full proof.

But farther, as faith is a grace unseen by the mortal eye, the real existence thereof is ascertained by its fruits. Now, are the genuine evidences of faith dwelling in your heart? Are these evidences gross ignorance of God and of divine things? Continued neglect of religious ordinances? Habitual swearing, drinking, and intemperance? If such are the evidences of genuine faith, then allow me to say that you may lay claim to real faith. But if, on the contrary, it is unquestionably certain, that all those who have true faith dwelling in their hearts, live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world, having a respect unto all the commandments of God, then the melancholy fact is too obvious, that as yet you are destitute of this heavenly grace, therefore debarred by the sacred oracles from approaching that holy table. Hence, in compassion to your soul, I must refuse you admittance.

D

CON. Pray,

CON. Pray, Sir, how is this compassion to my soul? For though I do not deny that I have sometimes been guilty of these crimes, yet I acknowledge them, and am sorry for them, and shall endeavor to be more careful of my future conduct.

FID. That will afford me the highest pleasure. Allow me however to tell you, that often there are expressions of sorrow for sin, and acknowledgments thereof, which are not accompanied with sincerity. But genuine repentance is a necessary qualification in every communicant.

CON. Dear Sir, do not constrain me to call you rude, and again to say, that instead of being compassionate, you are exceedingly uncharitable and severe in your censures. Why question the reality of my repentance from my own mouth?

FID. Be not offended, my friend. In no instance is the testimony of a man admitted in his own cause. It is your future actions and not your present expressions that must prove the reality of your repentance. It was the saying of a godly divine, "That hypocritical and superficial expressions signify nothing, but the powerful work of grace and regeneration, which changes the heart;" and scripture saith, 'out of the heart are the issues of life.' Admitting then that you are now heartily sorry for sin, which is the utmost extent of charity you require me to indulge; this will not prove your repentance sincere. For, besides sorrow for sin, repentance implies 'a turning from it unto God.' Can it therefore be deemed uncharitable to inform you, that the quality of your present sorrow will be ascertained from the quality of your future conduct? That will prove this, either real or hypocritical.

It merits also peculiar regard, that this is the very mark which our Lord hath given, by which to try the characters of professors. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Be not offended, therefore, when you are informed, that your external reformation must prove the reality

reality of your repentance before you have a right to ascend a communion table. Previous to that, new obedience flowing from a new heart, directed to proper ends, produced and invigorated by ardent love to God, must display their purifying effects in your conduct. But you know, Sir, that for these, time is requisite. Be not displeased when I request you to delay this solemn work, and if your conduct before another solemnity show your reformation, then with pleasure you will be admitted.

Allow me further to remind you, that if you take offence at the freedom I have now used, a strong evidence will be afforded of your want of proper dispositions. Conviction must fill your mind that I have done no more than my duty : Hence no just cause of offence. Your conduct has imposed upon me a very unpleasant task. Believe me, Sir, it would have afforded more pleasure if no cause of a refusal had existed. Nor will the pleasure be small upon the removal. Be admonished, therefore, speedily to abandon your sinful courses. Endeavor to cause the genuine nature of your repentance appear by a change of life. Let not your religion be the blaze of the moment, but the increasing flame of an holy life. ' The path of the just ' is like the shining light, that shineth more and more ' unto the perfect day.' Let not your reformation, therefore, be from grosser crimes merely, but a turning from all manner of sin. From the most darling lust, and unhallowed practice. Of Herod we read that he respected John, heard him gladly, and did many things, yet still he held fast his darling lust, still he went on in his ungodly course of cruelty, uncleanness, haughtiness, and impiety, until vengeance overtook him in an untimely death. Partial reformation plunges deeper in guilt. He who once seemed to set out well in the ways of religion and afterwards turns back, hastens with double speed to the pit of destruction.

Cry then mightily to God for mercy. Seek the

Lord with thy whole heart. He is the hearer of prayer. He will be found of you. He is the Father of mercies. The God of love. 'He hath so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life.' What could he have done more for his forlorn and sinful offspring? He is in Christ reconciling sinners to himself, not imputing unto believing men their trespasses. He invites, nay intreats, all to come to receive the blessing of salvation. Hear his own overpowering entreaties. 'Ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.' 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God and he will abundantly pardon.' Nay, in the language both of mercy and of majestic authority, Jesus himself calls upon rebelling men, saying, 'Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and besides me there is no Savior.' And in the most positive language the spirit of all grace declares, 'Jesus is able to save to the *very uttermost* all that come unto him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin.' 'He will by no means cast off them who come to him.'

Approach then this gracious and this Almighty Savior. Ask that you may receive. Be diligent in the use of all appointed means for increasing in holiness. Mortify every lust. Guard the door of your lips that you offend not with your tongue. It is the saying of the Holy Ghost, 'whoso bridleth not his own tongue, that man's religion is vain.' Subdue the polluted desire for strong drink. Be no more vanquished by your own depraved appetite. Fly the cup of intoxication as you
would

would the poisoned bowl. ' If sinners entice thee consent thou not.' Avoid their path. ' It leads to destruction. Their steps take hold of hell.' Associate with the excellent ones of the earth ; these are not the swearer, the drunkard, the sabbath-profaner, the absentee from public worship, the scoffer at religion, and the despiser of that which is good. Quite the reverse. Such men are the disgrace of humanity, the destroyers of human happiness and the dishonorers of the God of Heaven. If then you wish not to taste of their future cup, be not their present companion. ' A companion of fools shall be destroyed : but he who walketh with wise men shall be wise.' Walking with the fearers of the Lord, you shall be edified in the good ways of the Lord. These will teach you the way of God more perfectly. Their prayers shall reach the celestial throne in your behalf. ' The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth very much.' But other urgent calls will allow me no longer an interview with you at this time. I am engaged to visit a dying friend who is triumphing in the firm hope of eternal life, and who smiles to see his race so near run, and glory full in view.

CON. Dear Sir, I would wish to accompany you, and with tears I declare my reluctance to break off our present interview, and I hope my future conduct shall evince the genuine nature of my sorrow and my thankfulness for your fidelity, and your kind instructions. I am confident I need not request your prayers in my behalf, these will often be poured forth for my reformation and salvation.

" Tell me no more of earthly toys,
 " Of sinful mirth, of carnal joys,
 " The things I lov'd before ;
 " Let me but see my Savior's face,
 " And feel his animating grace,
 " And I desire no more."——

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

ANDRONICUS a Minister, and ELANDOR a religious young Person desiring to partake of the Holy Sacrament.

*I love them that love me ; and those that seek me early
shall find me.*

PROV. viii. 17.

ANDRONICUS. YOUR presence here, my young friend, affords me sincere pleasure. I hope you are come upon the common business of this evening.

ELANDOR. Yes, Sir, I would now humbly attempt to obey the dying command of my Savior. Too long, alas! I have neglected this important duty. Too long I have been disobedient to such a loving command.

AND. A full conviction of neglected duty is the forerunner of performance. Those are happy who by the influences of the divine Spirit have been illuminated to discover the path of duty, and who have by him been convinced of sin, and have also felt his love constraining them to holiness. Happy those who come to communicate from a principle of divine love. In this institution rich love is displayed. The love of the Father in sending his Son ; the love of the Son in cheerfully giving himself ; and the Love of the Holy Ghost in renewing the heart, and preparing to celebrate the dying love of Jesus.

But I flatter myself my young friend is sufficiently aware of the vast importance of this solemn approach to the living God. This unquestionably is the most solemn

solemn appearance before God which man can make on earth, 'until Christ come again.' Reflecting upon the present conduct of men, respecting the Lord's supper, my mind hath frequently been grieved. Some are unmindful what characters they admit to the Lord's table. Others teach that there is no more solemnity in this ordinance than in prayer, praise, and meditation. Promiscuous admission is certainly wrong. To say that there is no more importance or solemnity in this ordinance than in prayer, praise, and meditation, appears also to be wrong. Are there not common and also extraordinary acts of religious worship? Have not these obtained under every form of religious worship; proving their correspondence to the nature of things? Were there not common, and extraordinary sacrifices appointed under the Law? Were there not the morning and the evening sacrifice, and also the solemn festivals and the days of holy convocation? Did not our Lord himself give an example of unusual solemnity in the celebration of the first Supper? Can those acquainted with the history of the church deny, that *the early christians all with one voice declared by their actions, that they esteemed the approach to God at his table, the most solemn that man can make on earth?*

But, my young friend, the opinion of the great Dr. OWEN ought to have considerable weight in the decision of this question. His writings fully prove that he studied this subject with peculiar care. And concerning this matter he says * "It is a common received notion among christians, and it is *true*, that there is a *peculiar communion* with Christ in this ordinance which we have in *no other ordinance*; that there is a peculiar acting of faith in this ordinance which is in no other ordinance. This is the faith of the *whole church of christ*, and has been so in *all ages*. This is the greatest mystery of all the *practicals* of our
" christian

* Sacrament, Discours. p. 189.

“christian religion, a way of receiving Christ by eating
 “and drinking, something peculiar that is not *in pray-*
 “*er*, that is not in the *bearing of the word*, nor in any
 “other part of divine worship *whatsoever* ; a peculiar
 “participation of Christ; a peculiar acting of faith towards
 “Christ. This participation of Christ is *not carnal* but
 “*spiritual*.” Such Dr. OWEN delivers both as his own
 opinion, and also that of the whole church in all ages.

But this subject is placed in the most clear, convincing, and unanswerable point of view by the accurate and masterly pen of Mr. MACLAURIN of Glasgow *.
 “Communicating,” says he, “is beyond prayer, praise,
 “and meditation, because it joins these together, and
 “adds more to them. It is beyond mere spiritual
 “exercises of worship, because of the singular way
 “that it employs not only the soul but the body. It
 “is liker heaven than secret communion with God,
 “because it is an enjoyment of it in the visible com-
 “munion of saints. It is beyond private duties, be-
 “cause it is a public ordinance ; and beyond other
 “public ordinances, because it has the use of them join-
 “ed to it, as subservient to it, and adds something to
 “it. It is not merely a commemoration of God’s
 “chief gift, but a solemn receiving of it ; and what
 “it specially communicates is the very consummation
 “of that blessed work, the Redeemer’s death. It is an
 “honorable distinction put upon it by the circum-
 “stances of its appointment, being immediately by
 “the Redeemer himself, and at that remarkable time
 “when he was entering upon these last sufferings which
 “it chiefly commemorates. It is therefore *the most*
 “*solemn* and the *chief performance* of the *chief exercises*
 “*we are capable of*.”

To all which it may be added, that revelation posi-
 tively declares, that ‘ the King will come in to see
 ‘ the guests at his table. That God will be sanctified
 ‘ of all them who draw nigh unto him ; and before all
 ‘ the

' the people he will be glorified.' ' And that, great fear is due unto him in the meeting of his saints, and he will be had in reverence of all them who approach unto him.'

ELA. Oh Sir, my very heart trembles for fear of approaching God in an improper manner, yet I cannot restrain the desire which I feel to celebrate the death of Jesus.

AND. May every pure desire become more and more vehement and not lessen its exertions until holiness is produced. It is a token for good that my young friend trembles for fear of offending; whilst you are thus anxious however not to offend, be also anxious that holy reverence degenerates not into servile fear. The fear which agitates your soul, is I hope that holy fear which originates from displays of divine love.

ELA. Sometimes I would fondly hope so, but again the reverse is felt. But I beg, Sir, that you will deal impartially and faithfully with me, that I may obtain your aid in judging of my spiritual condition.

AND. Both affection and duty admonish ministers to fidelity and to care. Your request however lays you under obligations to be ingenuous in your narration, that so by the blessing of the divine Spirit every opportunity of being beneficial to you may be afforded.

ELA. I shall be impartial as far as permitted by a deceitful heart, tho' shame should frequently overspread my countenance. But O if ever it was true of any human heart it certainly is of mine, that it is deceitful and desperately wicked. O that the Spirit of all truth would search and try me, and guide me in the way of duty.

AND. He can perform this arduous task. Entrust it into his almighty hands. But whence this anxiety to know the plagues of your heart? Is such a conduct natural to an unconverted man? Are such ardent breathings the production of depravity? Nay rather, when they are accompanied with a belief of the gospel and a holy life, they are the indications of the operations

tions of the eternal Spirit. Can one bewail the deceitfulness of the heart who neither perceives nor feels the same? Can a dead man either see or feel? Hence the wailings ascending from a deceitful heart, accompanied with holiness, are signs that the Lord the Spirit hath opened the eyes of the mind to discern that deceit. Deceit discovered is on the way to be removed. And the same Power which affords a just conception of the human heart will afford that degree of illumination necessary for worthy communicating.

ELA. This reminds me to entreat you to inform me what is included in that knowledge which is required in order to beneficial communicating. I have often thought upon this without being able to ascertain its real extent.

AND. Neither perhaps may it be in my power to describe its true limits. It is frequent with the sacred, as well as other writers to express a whole by a part. The selection of that part appears to be arbitrary. For, sometimes they express the whole by the most important part. Sometimes by the most visible and obvious part. Sometimes by that part of the whole which is most correspondent to the subject illustrated. The attentive mind will recollect many instances of the truth of these remarks in the language used respecting the sufferings of Christ. The whole of his exquisite sufferings are expressed sometimes by the sufferings of his body. Sometimes, by the sufferings of his soul. Sometimes by his giving his flesh for the life of the world. And sometimes by shedding his blood for the remission of sin. Hence it is written, ' Christ his own-
' self bare our sin in his own body on the tree. He
' poured out his soul unto death. Thou shalt make
' his soul an offering for sin. Except ye eat the flesh,
' and drink the blood of the son of God, ye have no
' part in him. This is my body which is broken for
' you. We have redemption through his blood, even
' the forgiveness of sins. The blood of Jesus Christ his
' Son

'Son cleanseth from all sin.' These are a few of many passages which prove that it is usual with the sacred writers to express a whole by a principal part of that whole. And these phrases the New Testament writers use to express the illustrious person, the offices, the work, the exaltation, and the whole mediation of the glorious Redeemer.

It is obvious that commemorating requires in its very nature an acquaintance with the person, or the event commemorated. This acquaintance is either personal, or historical. The knowledge we have of Jesus is derived from the sacred record. There is also an experimental acquaintance that every believer hath of Christ, which is none of the least of the mysteries in godliness. Hence we read of the minds of the faithful being enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, of their growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ.

But inspiration speaks also of a constitution of Christ's person truly wonderful. His name is Wonderful, so is his person. He is the son of God made flesh. The Lawgiver made of a woman, made under the law. Immanuel, God in our nature. The Former of all things become the Servant of all. The Fellow of Jehovah, who thought it no robbery to be equal to God, became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, that in all things he might be made like unto his brethren whom he came to redeem. Such is the mysterious constitution of Jesus' person. Proper conceptions of whom are necessary in order to proper commemoration of his death. And let none——

ELA. Be not offended at my interruption: my mind is apt to forget matters of importance. Pray, how can feeble man understand the constitution of Christ's person, when it is so exceedingly mysterious and so far beyond the feeble conception of the human mind?

AND. It is similar to every other mystery; it cannot be fully explained or understood. But may not a mystery be believed upon substantial evidence, though its nature

nature cannot be unfolded? Were man to believe no truth or fact but what he could fully investigate and perceive, limited indeed would be the sphere of his belief and knowledge. Upon the report of infinite faithfulness we are bound to credit this wonderful fact concerning the nature of Christ. What stronger evidence would the human mind require? For, faith the sacred oracles, 'God cannot lie.'

Nay more, the divine Spirit hath condescended to give as full and distinct information upon that subject, as perhaps our limited powers could conceive. Why then should mortals either disbelieve or murmur? Why should not man believe the sayings of God? Why should not he adore him for what is made known, and believe where human power fails to comprehend? Nay, what astonishing love, that God should reveal so much, and display his love in such an amazing manner. Others may act as they please, but all who believe the gospel, and who have experienced divine teaching, will listen with an obedient ear to the voice of God.

ELA. Most cheerfully would I yield obedience to the voice of God. I wish however in every case to know with some degree of certainty whether it is his voice or not.

AND. My young friend should remember that this doctrine is the pillar and the ground of all revealed truth, and that there cannot be any proper commemoration of the death of Jesus without a firm belief therein. The men who esteem *Christ only one of our own order, and no more than a mere man*, reduce the sacrament of the Lord's supper merely to the remembrance of one who was eminently beneficial to society. Hence, what higher place do these assign to Christ than to the departed heroes whom the heathen nations venerated? But it is not intended to perplex the mind of my friend with these disputes farther than appears necessary to establish his mind in the truth, and to fortify him against seduction. It is frequently unprofitable, and al-

ways

ways unpleasant to enter upon the field of controversy. It was the expressive saying of an ancient divine, that "it is better to set meat before the people of God to feed upon, than bones merely to gnaw upon."

ELA. But, Sir, did you not speak of the knowledge of the different offices of Christ, as also included in the knowledge necessary for intelligent and acceptable communicating?

D. Nor do I retract the saying. For accommodato our circumstances, Christ executes three different offices. Sinful man is become darkened in his standing and ignorant of God: and Christ is a to remove this ignorance by the teaching of Word and Spirit. Once man was perfect in knowledge; the whole path of duty, and the whole field of mental improvement were full in his view. But the moment that sin entered the soul, darkness covered the mental powers. Hence all the descendants of Adam are now naturally ignorant of God, and unacquainted with the path of duty. In the amiable character of the Revealer of the Father's will to men, Jesus dispels the clouds of ignorance and of error, which hover over the human mind, and by his heavenly Word and Spirit infuses the cheering rays of knowledge and of truth.

By sin men are naturally guilty and condemned, but Jesus in the august character of the High Priest of the christian profession, hath once offered up himself a complete atonement for sin. He is now also the Advocate with the Father on the celestial throne; where he will continue to intercede for the church.

Men are by nature stubborn, refractory, and rebellious, and Christ in the majestic character of a King vanquishes their prejudices, subdues their corruptions, and restrains and conquers all his and their enemies. Thus in the execution of these three offices, he shows that in him all fulness dwells, and that he is able to save to the very uttermost, all who come unto him for salvation.

ELA. But since all believers are completely justified

E

by

by the fulness and the perfection of Christ's works; are they *now* under the obligation to obey the divine law as a rule of life?

AND. Certainly all believers are bound to be holy. Christ never died to purchase an indulgence in sin, but a deliverance from sin. The chief and the *direct* ends of his death were *to make atonement for sin*, and *to purchase unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*. Hence though believers are made free indeed by Christ, yet they are not freed from the ties of holy obedience. The sons of God are all sons of liberty: but they are also bound by the powerful cords of love to perfect manners. They are freed from the law as a condemning power, for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. They are also dead to the law in respect of seeking salvation by the works of the law. Thus of the sons of faith Paul says, 'we are dead to the law' 'that we might be married to another husband, even to Christ.' But still no situation nor circumstance can alter the invariable obligation upon every reasonable creature to be holy as God is holy. Nor let my friend once suppose that holiness is a grievous task. The commandments of Christ are not grievous. It is the saying of Dr. OWEN, "When the soul works out of love, what it doth is *not* grievous. And the inward and outward commands of Christ will be grievous to all that are not under the constraining power and efficacy of his love." In proportion to the influence of the divine Spirit within, man will delight in holiness.

ELA. I hesitate not to declare, that my mind is fully persuaded of the truth concerning the fulness of Christ's work to procure the salvation of all them who actually believe, and also of their obligations to purity of manners; however, my anxiety to be properly informed respecting every important article of faith emboldens me to entreat you to inform me by what scripture-evidence it is supported, that Christ made *complete* atonement.

AND.

AND. The approving voice of the Eternal Father while Jesus was accomplishing our redemption, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased';—the saying of Jesus upon the cross, 'It is finished';—the Great Judge raising him from the dead;—his exaltation at the right hand of power, and his having received full power to dispense the blessings of salvation to rebellious men, as so many undeniable evidences, fully prove that the satisfaction of Jesus was complete.

Nay more, upon the *perfection* of Christ's righteousness depends all our hope of heaven. Devoid of a *perfect* righteousness the law cannot acquit. But this no sinful man has of himself; and the only method made known for acceptance with God is the righteousness of Christ. Now, if that righteousness be not perfect, it cannot justify, and if it cannot justify, then there can be no salvation for men. For, saith the sacred Record, 'there is none righteous, no not one, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' And all the schemes which human arrogance has framed in order to obtain mercy without the righteousness of Christ, are only the vain boastings of a proud depraved heart, that can work no deliverance. The voice of heaven is, 'Except a man receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace unto the lowly. The grace of God bringeth salvation.'

ELA. But pray, since these sufferings of Jesus procured eternal redemption; were they also absolutely necessary, and could Infinite Wisdom devise no other method of expiation?

AND. It is impious in mortals to limit the wisdom and the power of the Most High, and to say whether or not any other method of redemption could have been devised. Who knoweth the depth of Infinite Wisdom? Who knoweth the mind of the Lord? Secret things belong unto God. We are however fully authorised to aver, that all the exquisite sufferings of Jesus were

necessary in order to make atonement. God is wise and just, and doeth nothing in vain. But scripture teaches that these sufferings were by the express appointment of God, and also that they were inflicted by him. 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. God made him to be sin for us. It pleased the Lord to bruise him. God hath set him forth a propitiation for sin. God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all. He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.' Since therefore they were by the express appointment of God, and inflicted by him, the plain conclusion is this, that they were all both just and necessary ;—necessary for vindicating the honors of the divine law ;—glorifying the divine perfections, demonstrating the evil of sin, and bringing salvation to the forlorn sons of Adam. And, O my young friend, reflecting upon the nature of Christ's sufferings, and the love expressed in them, who can refrain from crying out, 'O the height, and the depth, the breadth, and the length of the love of God in Christ Jesus, it passeth knowledge.' O what love, that God should become man !—That He who sustains the pillars of heaven should submit to poverty, to reproach, to shame, and to suffering for the creatures of his own hand !—That the Son of God should endure such sorrows, and agonies, and woes, to obtain salvation for mortals !—That He should be forsaken of his heavenly Father, that we might be forsaken only for a small moment, but favored with endless enjoyment ! O what cords of love to draw men to obedience ! O what a flame of love to animate the hearts of believers !

ELA. They are greatly blessed indeed who have an interest in the mediation of Christ, and therefore are delivered from the wrath to come ! Such may cheerfully endure affliction. Such may smile at the sneer of reproach. Such may glory in all their afflictions, confident that these work out for them 'a far more exceeding

'ing, even an eternal weight of glory.' The hope of heaven——

AND. My young friend will excuse the interruption. I hope he is not destitute of substantial expectations respecting the enjoyment of the happiness of heaven. The animating hope of heaven is a great advancer of holiness. 'Every man who hath this hope purifieth himself.'

ELA. O dear Sir, happy for my soul were such the case: but ah, I am afraid that it is not.

AND. Why say so? Are you not sorry for sin? Are you not longing for holiness? Do you not carefully avoid 'every appearance of evil?' Are you not studying to glorify God? Are you not longing to be more and more transformed into the image and likeness of the Son of God? Certainly then these are no small indications of grace implanted in the soul. And it is a glorious truth, that wherever it is planted it will grow up and flourish unto eternal life.

ELA. I have cause to mourn that all these things are not with me as they should, and as I could wish. I would however fondly seek after a participation of these blessings and joys. But my heart is naturally hard and stubborn, and my mind prone to backwardness and folly. My heart is not sufficiently melted for sin. Oh the sad corruption of my soul! Oh the vain thoughts which lodge within me! O my languor in prayer and my criminal indifference in the things of religion!

AND. Be not dejected. Faith can vanquish all these difficulties. All things are possible to him that believeth: because all things are possible to him that promiseth. Be therefore strong in the faith.

ELA. I have need to cry, 'Lord increase my faith.' My faith is weak, my affections grovelling. 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.'

AND. The Lord's supper is, by the divine blessing, admirably adapted to strengthen, to animate, and to cheer the heart, to elevate the affections, and to inspire

the most sublime and lofty sentiments. In a dependent, humble, and vigorous manner use the appointed means to obtain that preparation which God hath promised ; that so at the table of the Lord your soul may be refreshed and comforted, and made to exult in the God of salvation. But our agreeable conversation must for the present be interrupted. With the greatest pleasure I admit you to the Lord's table, and ardently wish that it may prove a happy time to your soul.

“ O my soul, see to it ; and again, I say, see to it,
 “ that thou do *with full purpose of heart cleave to the*
 “ *Lord* : that thy present devotion do not prove a sudden flash ; but having set *thy hand to the plough*, do not
 “ think of *looking back*. Remember that awful text,
 “ *It had been better for them not to have known the way*
 “ *of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn*
 “ *from the holy commandment*. Let this word be a
 “ spur to thy diligence, but not revive thy scruples.
 “ It were better never to communicate, than afterwards
 “ to apostatise. Therefore in the strength of Christ,
 “ hold on thy way : do not decline the Lord's table,
 “ but prepare for it ; that, being a worthy communicant here, thou mayest at last be a partaker of the
 “ inheritance of the saints in light.”——

“ Unhappy souls ! that seek for joy
 “ In pleasure's empty scheme,
 “ In vain you count ambition's toy
 “ Delusive as a dream.
 “ In vain does beauty charm the eye,
 “ Or tempt th' admiring gaze :
 “ Can painted shadows satisfy,
 “ Where virtue adds no grace?”——

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

THEOPHILUS a Minister, and ZACCHEUS an aged person requesting admittance, for the *first* time, to the Lord's Supper.

And about the eleventh hour, he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, why stand ye here all the day idle? go ye also into the vineyard and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive.

MATTH. XX. 6, 7.

ZACCHEUS. **Y**OU will perhaps, Sir, be surprised upon receiving a visit from one who has not been accustomed to frequent the company of ministers. But I have lately been hearing you preach, and your sermons have given me a very different view of matters.

THEOPHILUS. Not my sermons, Sir, rather I hope the power of the divine Spirit hath produced a change in the sentiments of my friend. It hath afforded me no small pleasure to observe you regularly attending the church for some time past.

ZAC. To my shame, and to the disgrace of my nature, the time was when I disregarded the public institutions of religion. But more pleasure is now felt in attending than ever was in neglecting them. Now, I long for the return of the solemn day. Now, I count the Sabbath of the Lord a delight. How am I ashamed to inform you, that I am come to request admittance to the Lord's table for the *first* time!

THE. What! dear Sir, have you never communicated? Have you lived to grey hairs in disobedience to this command of Jesus!

ZAC.

ZAC. Wonder not at this, Sir; if I had been properly attentive to the other commands of Jesus, this one would not have been neglected. But was it to be expected that he, who had no regard for the laws of God, and who hated all godliness, should have any love for this solemn service? Could it be supposed that this duty should be regarded by him who was a ringleader in every kind of profanity?

THE. It affords me pleasure to learn that you have now a conviction of your crimes. Conviction of folly is the beginning of wisdom. But pray, how was this change of sentiments and of conduct effected?

ZAC. Your office, Sir, entitles you to the history of those who come upon my errand. Mine shall be given with candor and impartiality. Long I lived an-ungodly life,—neglected the public worship of God, the reading of the scriptures, and the solemn duty of prayer. Rambling on however in this iniquitous course, one sabbath a considerable time past, I accidentally went into the church, and remaining for some time heard your reasoning on the great and awful punishments awaiting the wicked. I there heard you prove, that they who did not believe in the name of the Son of God behaved inevitably to perish. Nay that the wrath of God *already* abideth upon them. I there heard you prove, that all were unquestionably wicked who absented from the public worship of God, who violated his holy sabbath, indulged in swearing, or lying, and who lived in the habitual neglect of secret prayer. My heart, stubborn as it was, could not evade such a direct charge; my mind began to be agitated. Then I began to reflect upon my woful condition, and dreaded dying in that awful situation. I left the church deeply pondering upon my former ways.

THE. And I hope my friend did not, as, alas! too many in similar circumstances, plunge into dissipation and ungodly company, in order to stifle conviction.

ZAC. Remorse had taken a faster hold of my mind.
Conviction

Conviction would not let me go. I retired to meditate upon my past life. And Oh what a scene presented itself! The numerous sins of youth and riper years came into sad remembrance. The view overwhelmed my mind. I could scarce sustain it. I attempted to pray. But, ah, that was work to which I was little accustomed. But, as I could, I cried for the pardon of past offences. My heart cried ardently unto the Lord.

THE. Prayer is excellent medicine for an awakened conscience. God is the hearer of prayer. But it is the prayer of faith alone which he hears. He is a merciful God. It is he who pardoneth all iniquity. I hope he hath heard the voice of your supplication. None ever sought him in vain, who hath sought in faith. 'But without faith it is impossible to please God. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' The prayer of the wicked is sin.

ZAC. I hope I found prayer singularly beneficial to me. By prayer I found my mind somewhat relieved. My expressions were indeed incoherent, yet my soul was in real earnest. Necessity taught to pray. Then, in order to learn the way of mercy, I began to read the scriptures. Then I began to examine, with minute care, the evidence of their divine origin. Then I labored to discover the deceitfulness and the plagues of my own heart. Nay, I earnestly wished to know the very worst of my condition. I also wished to be conducted in the ways of holiness.

THE. Excellent motives to bring to the noble work of consulting the sacred volume. This is crying after knowledge and lifting up the voice for understanding. This is seeking after her as for silver, and searching for her as for hid treasures. Did all approach the sacred record with such motives, knowledge would suddenly be increased. Continue then with diligence, with faith, and with unremitting ardor, to search the scriptures. These testify of Jesus the only
Savior,

Savior, and without whom we can do nothing ; and these direct in the way of duty. But I have interrupted your narration.

ZAC. My narration must be both confused and imperfect. I can only say, that my anxiety increased with the views obtained of my situation as a guilty and a condemned criminal. Feeling such anxiety about my soul, I no longer remained indifferent about the great work of salvation. Then with peculiar ardor of soul, I began to amend my ways and my doings. With strong fervor of soul, I sought after faith in Jesus,—was regular in my attendance upon ordinances, and observed the laws of sobriety. Since that time various have been the operations of my mind. Sometimes a dawn of hope overspreading my soul; and at other times clouds and darkness surrounding me.

THE. This is a changing state. In a particular manner changes await the sons of God. I hope however that you have been regular in the practice of devotion, and in general have felt your hatred of sin increasing; and have been endeavoring after holiness in heart and life.

ZAC. Necessity taught attention to the means of improvement. Could one in such circumstances and exposed to such dangers, neglect to cry with the whole heart for mercy? Could one in such circumstances, neglect the means of grace? But ah! Sir, I am jealous over mine own heart, respecting my future conduct, lest I again return to the ways of vanity and of folly. Your advice, is earnestly entreated.

THE. This you have a right to demand. In addition to what I have already said respecting the reading of the scriptures, and an attention to the other appointed means of grace; let my friend remember, that without Christ he can do nothing. That devoid of his strength no progress can be made in the work of holiness. He alone can communicate strength to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and to rise superior to depravity. My friend

ough

ought to remember that nothing is more ruinous to spiritual consolation than seeking happiness in the performance of duty, without a proper regard to Jesus. The performance of duty is the means which God hath ordained in order to obtain consolation and holiness : but here man is neither to rest, nor to attribute too much unto them.

ZAC. But, dear Sir, are you not constantly admonishing to use the means of grace, in order to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ ?

THE. True : but there is a material difference between using these means, and trusting in them for defence and for salvation. These are the only steps by which we ascend to the Rock of Ages, where alone there is sure standing,—where alone man can stand with safety when the billows of temptation, persecution, and reproach beat against him. And beat these will against all who live godly in Christ Jesus. It is necessary to guard my friend against this error in christian practice, because it is natural for newly-awakened christians to fall into it. Unmindful that we have lost our ancient strength to labor, it is exceedingly natural for man to go back to the old covenant of works ; to seek salvation by the deeds of the law. It is narrated of the prodigal son, that when he was reduced to absolute want of every thing, still the pride of his heart remained. Indigent and starving as he was, yet he would not be indebted to his father for future support. But he would labor for it ; therefore he thus reasoned with himself, saying, ‘ I will now arise, and go to my father, and say unto him I am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants.’ Similar is the case with returning sinners.

ZAC. But pray, is there any thing improper in such conduct ? Are not men in various passages of scripture admonished to the practice of holiness in order to obtain salvation ? Are they not commanded to ‘ ask that they may receive, to seek, that they may find, to
‘ knock,

‘ knock, that it may be opened unto them ?’ Nay ‘ to work out their own salvation with fear and with trembling ?’ Do not all these passages admonish to the performance of good works in order to obtain salvation ?

THE. The scripture positively declares, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. But it is asked how does a fallen creature obtain strength to perform good works ? It is granted that good works are to be performed in order to salvation, but the question is, “ *How is the sinner qualified to perform these good works ?*” And should it be found that he receives all his strength to do so from God, then his salvation must be as entirely free as if no good works were in the case. Nor can it be proved, in direct opposition both to experience and to scripture, that man in his fallen and enfeebled state hath strength to obey the divine law. He is wholly without strength. He is wholly defiled and vicious. In him dwelleth no good thing. To these sayings of Inspiration daily experience fully accords. The consequence therefore is plain, that if good works are performed, these must be the effect of divine strength, and only the evidences of grace existing in the heart, and consequently salvation is entirely free. Correspondent to this view, in the most explicit terms, Jesus says, ‘ without me ye can do nothing ;’ and again it is said, that ‘ salvation is not of works but of grace. Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy. By grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. And if a gift, then it is not of works.’

ZAC. Are then, Sir, all works excluded in the matter of salvation ! and has no man any merit in his salvation ?

THE. They certainly are excluded with respect to any merit or virtue in themselves. These are only the evidences of pardon, but they are not the causes thereof. They shew that the man who displays them in his conduct is unquestionably pardoned : but they neither entitle to the favor nor the friendship of the Most High.

Let

Let not my friend, however, disrespect good works because of any thing now said; for, as we have already mentioned, it is written, 'without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.' These remarks are only intended to preserve from placing any confidence in good works.

ZAC. Nor was the danger small to which I was exposed in that respect. But I hope it shall now be my care to avoid such a fatal mistake. Oh what need have I of religious instruction, and how apt ever to wander from the path of duty!

THE. But let not my friend become remiss in the performance of good works; for the children of God show by their conduct that they love holiness, and daily approve themselves to God in well doing. Be then regular in the various duties of religion;—in reading the scriptures;—in attending the preaching of the word;—in the pleasant duty of prayer;—in conversing with the godly;—and in using all the other means ordained for increasing with all the increase of God. But we have inadvertently been carried away from the chief subject of this night,—the commemoration of the death of Jesus. This is an ordinance which is in a peculiar manner calculated for the increase of holiness. Here God frequently waters his people in rich abundance, and causes them to bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

ZAC. Too long have I neglected this important duty. But, should you, Sir, find me qualified, in a humble dependence upon divine strength, I will now attempt it.

THE. Rather you should have said, should you find yourself qualified. The injunction of the Apostle in this matter is, 'let a man,' *let every man* 'examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.' It belongs to every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind respecting his right to partake of this holy sacrament. But it becomes you in a particular manner to enquire concerning your acquaintance with the nature, the use, and the intentions of this ordinance.

Remember that it is intended only for the friends of Jesus ;—that there they may celebrate the love of God to them, in sending his Son to procure eternal redemption for them ;—that there is displayed the evil of sin in the exquisite sufferings of the Son of God ;—that there the most unequalled display of benevolence is exhibited. And remember that all who come there should have faith dwelling in their hearts, to feed upon Christ ;—to perceive the nature of the spiritual blessings represented in this solemn institution. Devoid of faith, the spiritual nature of this ordinance cannot be understood.

Farther, this is a feast of love. Here love reigns. And all who come here, ought to approach with their hearts glowing with love to the Eternal Three. That all the graces of the divine Spirit being called forth into vigorous exercise, they may in a proper manner wait upon the King, the Lord of hosts. But O Sir, remember that if these graces do not exist in the heart, they cannot be called forth into action.

ZAC. Indistinct indeed is my conception of my spiritual condition. O that God would strengthen my faith, and enable me to believe to the saving of the soul ! O that the Lord would search and try me, and lead me in the way of holiness ! I would fondly say that I feel an abiding thirst after holiness, and after the approbation of my God. I now delight in his ways,—in the company of the godly,—in the exercises of devotion. And I feel an increasing love to God, and also to all men.

THE. These are no uncertain indications of the existence of grace in the heart. These prove that the Lord the Spirit hath been at work in your soul. And O how comforting is the consideration that he who begins a good work will carry it on to the day of Christ ! ‘ His gifts and callings are without repentance.’ Come then to the table of the Lord. You have too long neglected this duty. Like one who hath much forgiven,
love

love much. Like one who hath long neglected duty, be now more keenly engaged in the service of God. Redeem the time. Believe in the word of God, that so you may be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy place. Pray ardently for your ungodly companions who are yet wandering in the ways of destruction. Pray for the whole church of God. Pray for the ministers of the sanctuary, that they may be clothed with salvation, and that all the saints be made to shout aloud for joy.

“ I must examine myself concerning my love, an essential and comprehensive grace. If I do not sincerely love the Master of the blessed feast, and all the regular guests, I cannot be welcome. Come then, O my soul, is thy *heart circumcised to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul ? This is the first and great commandment*. Canst thou truly say, that thy desire is towards him, and thy delight in him ? Dost thou love, *not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth ?* has he the pre-eminence in thy soul ? Canst thou say, *whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I can desire besides thee ?* Is Christ precious to thee beyond comparison and competition ? And canst thou truly say, *yea doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ?*

“ Is thy love to him a natural love, the effect of serious thought, a deep conviction of his transcendent excellency ? has the Spirit of God opened thy eyes, to see that he is the *chief of ten thousands, and altogether lovely ?* and canst thou tell what the church’s *beloved is more than another’s beloved ?*”

“ My love to thee should flame,

“ My hope surmount the skies ;

“ At ev’ry vile and wand’ring thought,

“ My hatred quick should rise.”

A LETTER FROM FIDUCIUS TO JUNIA,

GIVING

An Account of the Reformation of CONTEMNUS,
and of his Admission to the Lord's Table.

The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I JOHN i. 7. 9.

Dear SIR,

HISTORY is peculiarly dignified and useful. It records truth for the instruction of mankind. That part of history, which hath for its object a delineation of the characters of selected and distinguished individuals, excels both in utility and in pleasure. There we learn what human nature is. We behold in a variety of visible streams the overflowings of natural depravity. In the lives of some men, we behold depravity overflowing all its usual banks, and laboring to deluge all around, and, instead of subsiding, continuing to increase and roll along, until they themselves, and many of their companions, are carried away with the impetuous torrent of vice, and tumbled headlong into destruction. In the lives of other men, though the streams of depravity can obviously be traced, yet its violent overflowings are never to be perceived. Again, in the lives of others, we are called in one part to behold the impetuous torrents of vice extending to unprecedented bounds, and ere long gradually or more suddenly subsiding, and giving place to the bitter waters of repentance, and the enriching streams of divine mercy
and

and grace. Nor do these subside until they proceed farther than the destructive waters of depravity. Of the truth of this remark the character of Manasseh, of Mary Magdalene, of Paul, and of many others which might be mentioned, are eminent proofs.

Among the numerous instances, which history affords, I have now the pleasure of adducing Contemnus as one. I have been too long in answering your letter. But the excuse is contained in this. It did not appear proper to give a narration of this matter too speedily; before the fruits of reformation had arrived at some degree of maturity. It appears, that the account which I gave you of the conversation which passed between Contemnus and me, when he requested admittance to the Lord's table, and was refused, has produced great anxiety in your benevolent mind. In proportion as your mind was then grieved it will now rejoice. There is not only joy among the angels of God, but there is also joy among the saints on earth, over one sinner that repenteth. When an immortal spirit is rescued from the chains of Satan, the holy soul exults for joy, because God is glorified, and a soul saved. The reflection is also pleasant, and God ought to have all the praise, when one is honored to be instrumental in such a glorious work. The admonitions which were given to Contemnus were blessed unto him. Our conversation gave birth to serious reflection. This reflection brought his crimes into view. The bustle of dissipation was succeeded by the dreadful forebodings of coming vengeance. Admonitions and reproofs kept fast hold of his mind. After enduring the most acute anguish of soul, he was again constrained to wait upon me, in order to receive advice, concerning his spiritual concerns. How pleasant to see a despiser and a persecutor anxiously enquiring what he shall do to be saved! When Contemnus visited me, I beheld conscience exerting her full vigor upon him. He was indeed a terror to himself, and to all around him. He felt, in sad experience, that it is an

evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Most High. Neither day nor night he could obtain rest. He was led, however, to use the proper means to obtain deliverance from these painful sensations. Like vicious Manasseh, after the divine Spirit enlightened his understanding, he ' besought the Lord and humbled himself greatly before God.' Like every wicked man, Contemnus formerly restrained prayer before God: but now in the ardor of his soul, he entreated the Lord to show mercy. Nor was his prayer the offspring of hypocrisy, but the agonizing groans of a sinner, who felt the weight of unpardoned guilt. The anxious cries of one who saw himself in danger of perishing. I admonished him to continue diligent and ardent in prayer. To read with particular care, those passages of scripture, some of which I pointed out, in which the evil of sin and its direful consequences are most fully described. This I did, that so the mind might be kept awake to conviction, until the deadly wound of sin was sufficiently probed. I requested him also to read those passages which express, in the clearest manner, the readiness of God to show mercy: and the ability of Jesus to save, to the very uttermost, all who come unto him. This I did, that so his mind might receive comfort along with the discoveries of sin, and thus be kept from giving place to despair.

Following these instructions, and frequently visiting me, and receiving such counsel as his particular case seemed to require, and, whilst preaching the gospel, dropping such hints as appeared most adapted to his situation, through the blessing of God upon his own word, he gradually received ease and comfort. In his experience it is fully manifested, that it is the word of God which ' maketh wise unto salvation ;'—that it is usually the seed of conversion ;—that divine truth conveyed to the mind with the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power, is that which God most frequently blesses for the salvation of the soul. O dear Sir, we can never sufficiently value the precious word of truth: Let us
search

search the scriptures with redoubled ardor. Above every accomplishment, let us covet to be mighty in the scriptures. Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, that it may qualify us for being able ministers of the New Testament.

Contemnus is now leading a very different life, and I hope will continue so to do. Unlike the slothful, he did not linger, but hastily prepared to keep the commandments of God. Now he actively labors to compensate, as far as possible, the injury he hath done to God and to society. He who formerly profaned the Holy Sabbath, and absented from the worship of God, is now sanctifying the Sabbath, and regular in his attendance in the house of God. He who formerly delighted in profanity is now delighting in holiness. The companion of fools is become the companion of the excellent ones of the earth. He who was proud and stubborn, is humble and yielding ;—unjust, is now the pattern of equity ;—cruel and blood-thirsty, is compassionate and merciful ;—dissipated, is temperate. He who was formerly covetous, is become bountiful, and now honors the Lord with his substance. That which was formerly lavished upon sinful pleasures is now consecrated to religious purposes. Now all his power, and influence, and activity are devoted to their proper Owner, the God of Heaven. Nay more, he who was the leader in every kind of wickedness, is now the leader in the good ways of the Lord. The active servant of Satan is become the active servant of the Most High.

After this account you will easily perceive, that it was no difficult matter to comply with the second request of Contemnus, to admit him to the Lord's table. At our last celebration of the Lord's supper he was enrolled a member of our congregation. That was a time of great rejoicing and of consolation to his soul. God is usually peculiarly kind to young converts at his table. O how great is the goodness of God ! Surely he is a God who heareth prayer !—in whom com-
passions

passions flow ;—plenteous in mercy ;—nay the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace. Surely Jesus will not cast off any who come to him. Jesus is able to save to the very uttermost. The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin. There is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Surely there is nothing too hard for the Lord the Spirit. He can take away the hard and stony heart and give an heart of flesh. He can enlighten, convince, renew, and perfect in holiness *the most obdurate and most perverse sinner.*

Join with me, dear Sir, in praising the Lord for his wondrous grace ; and in praying that many such displays of rich grace may be manifested towards notorious sinners who are wandering in ways of folly.

The papers which I mentioned shall be sent you, and I hope you will peruse them with the eye of the critic and the heart of the friend. Their fate will in a great measure be decided by your judgment.

Wishing you much comfort and much success in the work of the Lord, I am, dear Sir, your affectionate Brother in the gospel of Christ,

FIDUCIUS.

“ To God, who chose us in his Son,
 “ Ere time its course began ;
 “ To Christ, who left his radiant throne,
 “ And died for wretched man ;
 “ To God the Spirit, who applies
 “ The Lamb’s atoning sacrifice ;

“ To the eternal, equal, *Three,*
 “ The undivided *One,*
 “ Let saints, and angels both agree
 “ To give the praise alone.
 “ In earth, in heaven, by all ador’d,
 “ The Holy, Holy, Holy Lord.”

EBENEZER.

“ BUT

BUT, Oh ! what mercies yet abound !
 " Lo there again, the gracious sound !
 " How pleasing are these sighs and groans,
 " These tears of my repenting sons !
 " Mov'd is my heart ; this voice hath charms ;
 " Come, children, to my open arms !
 " *Here's room for you*—of mercy store
 " For *all of you*, and thousands more ;
 " Your wand'rings henceforth I will heal,
 " My law upon your hearts will seal ;
 " There shall my Spirit ever dwell,
 " And keep you spite of sin and hell.
 " O glorious promise ! Wondrous grace !
 " In humble faith we lift our face :
 " Estrang'd from thee, long did we roam,
 " But now we to our Father come.
 " Angels and men behold—This day
 " Our idols all we cast away ;
 " Our foreign lords we hence disclaim,
 " And never shall adore their name.
 " Father behold, and us receive ;
 " Thy holy promis'd Spirit give ;
 " Life, light, and strength may he impart,
 " And dwell for ever in our heart !
 " From fierce attacks and secret snares,
 " Temptations strong, and inward fears,
 " From faintings that our sins attend,
 " Father, in mercy, us defend !
 " Supported by thy favor free,
 " The jest of scorners let us be ;
 " The drunkard's song, as outcasts vile ;
 " All welcome, if our Father smile.
 " In us, tho' sin doth much prevail,
 " Tho' still surrounding foes assail,
 " Tho' in ourselves we can't endure,
 " In God is *our salvation sure.*"

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

EPENETUS a Minister, and ELENORA a young Lady desiring to commemorate the Death of Christ.

The King's daughter is all glorious within ; her clothing is of wrought gold.

PSAL. xlv. 13.

EPENETUS. **I**T gives me much pleasure to see you, Madam. It is hoped your friends are all well.

ELENORA. Yes, Sir, I thank you, they are all in good health.

EPE. This evening being appointed for conversing with those young persons who intend to join our congregation on the next opportunity of commemorating the death of our dear Redeemer, I hope this is your business here.

ELE. I would fondly, Sir, partake of that solemn ordinance, should you find me qualified.

EPE. My young friend should remember that the chief part of that work falls to her own share. You are best acquainted with your own character. And I hope you are also acquainted with the qualifications required in order to acceptable communicating.

ELE. Not so well acquainted as I ought, and might, had I properly improved my religious advantages. But you know also, Sir, that one is too apt to be partial in the estimation of her own qualifications. Deceit dwells in every human heart ; particularly respecting the value of religious attainments. Therefore ministers

sters are appointed the judges of the qualifications necessary for beneficial communicating.

EPE. Arduous is the task to judge of the qualifications required in the worthy communicant. Man can only judge from outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the heart. This however I acknowledge is part of the trust committed to ministers and elders, for the proper discharge of which they must one day give an account to the Head of the church. Hence, while impartiality and fidelity ought to mark their conduct, their hearers also ought to be candid. Ingenuously informing them of their motives, feelings, and manner of life, that, according to the ability of human discernment, a proper estimate may be made of each character.

ELE. My heart, I must acknowledge, is deceitful and desperately wicked: however it shall be my endeavor not to impose in this matter.

EPE. She who imposes in religious matters, imposes chiefly upon herself. In every religious service we have to do with God. He cannot be deceived. Revelation declares that he is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. To him the characters of all are perfectly known. The thick veil of hypocrisy cannot conceal from his view. The hidden recesses of the human heart are unfolded before him. Great fear is therefore due unto the Lord. He ought to be approached with reverence and godly fear.

ELE. Reflecting upon the nature of this solemnity, fear agitates my soul lest I should eat and drink unworthily. But I feel a strong and an increasing desire to obey the command of Jesus.

EPE. Blessed is that person whose heart always moves with godly fear. This induces to supplicate for divine aid. This fear also animates to the diligent use of the means ordained for preparation. These God hath promised to succeed. The child who loves his parent is careful not to offend. This care nourishes obedience. Obedience prevents paternal chastisements.

Numerous

Numerous beneficial effects flow from filial fear. Hence they are always blessed who fear the Lord. But slavish fear crushes the spirit of ingenuous homage. It chains the nobler powers of the soul. The strong desire however which you express to obey the command of Jesus, is some evidence that you are not under the influence of that bondage. Certainly it is a just, and a proper desire to wish, from proper motives, to commemorate the death of Jesus. And the Holy Ghost saith, God, will fulfil the just desire of those that fear him. Those therefore who sincerely fear him may, agreeable to his own promise, expect to be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy place.

ELE. My desire is strong, and I hope also unfeigned. But Oh the necessity of proper preparation in order to approach the God of love.

EPE. Your anxiety I hope flows from a proper origin. But permit me to add, that, it is of the greatest consequence that you minutely examine the motives which actuate your conduct. The voice of unerring knowledge is, 'out of the heart are the issues of life.' But a defiled heart cannot send forth pure actions. Can a polluted fountain send forth pure streams? Pure motives can only dwell in a purified heart: and pure motives alone produce virtuous conduct. Nor can any human heart be purified, but by the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost. It is also certain that the real value of human actions is chiefly ascertained by the quality of the motives from whence they flow. It is narrated of one of the Kings of Israel, that 'he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.' One ought not only to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, but it ought also to be done with a perfect heart. To celebrate the wondrous love of Jesus is highly proper, but it ought also to be done from proper motives, and directed unto proper ends.

ELE. May I not ask, if it is not a proper motive to profess

profess the faith of the gospel, and to partake of the Lord's supper? Is it not usual for persons of my years to do so?

EPE. True, this is a reasonable service; and it is also usual for persons arrived at maturity to keep this solemn service. But O, my friend ought to beware of coming to the table of the Lord *merely* in compliance with the example of others. A nobler motive should bring to the sacred feast. Powerful is the effect of example upon human conduct. This, more than any other active principle, operates in practice. Stubborn as the human mind is, it is flexible to imitation. Nor is imitation altogether criminal even in this matter. As a feebleness motive it may innocently operate, but as a principal motive it is criminal. The impelling motive should be from within. It should originate in the mind. Or in sacred language it is the love of Christ that should *constrain*. A sweet constraint indeed. How powerful the love of Jesus in dying for us! Who can resist the pleasant force of the love of Jesus manifested by the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost upon the soul! In creating again in Christ Jesus unto good works;—in purifying the heart by faith. Such I hope is the case with you, Madam; but excuse enquiring more particularly into this matter. Do you recollect when you began seriously to seek after salvation? I grant that it may be difficult to tell when, or describe the manner in which a change was produced in your character; however you can, I hope, recollect some leading circumstances. These I beg you will narrate with simplicity and with candor.

ELE. It is a considerable time since I began to feel anxiety respecting my eternal concerns, if indeed I can say that I am as yet seriously concerned. This however is a question of no small difficulty to me.

EPE. In proper time, it is hoped, that question will be amply resolved to your great consolation. Sometimes the operations of the Spirit are visible, and strong;
 G sometimes

sometimes less obvious and forcible. One thing however is certain, that regeneration always produces holiness. Hence, conversion is always proved by purity of manners. During some time past, I have with pleasure beheld you more regular in your attendance upon the preaching of the gospel. Your anxious looks have also indicated an attentive heart. Nor have you, I hope, heard without improvement.

ELE. Well may I this evening remember my faults. Time was when the house of God was unfrequented by me ;—when the Sabbath was a weariness ;—when traversing the fields, or lolling in indolence, I spent my Sabbaths. O my heart bleeds at the remembrance. My heart is overcome. Good cause have mine eyes to weep, which might have justly this evening been lifting up in endless torments.

EPE. Be not too much overcome of sorrow. Remember that the tears of genuine repentance are singular blessings from the father of mercies. Those are highly favored who have the various fountains of penitential sorrow broken up in the soul, and made to rush forth in consequence of sin. Sin must either cause weeping and sorrow here, or it will cause wailing and gnashing of teeth hereafter. Thrice happy, therefore, are all who mourn for sin ; these shall be comforted. The tears of penitence water the trees of righteousness. These trees are the planting of the Lord of Hosts, and every plant which our heavenly Father hath planted shall grow up and flourish. In old age, when others fade, they shall still be fat and flourishing, to shew that the Lord is upright. The trees of righteousness alone bring forth fruit unto eternal life.

ELE. But, O Sir, the important question is this, *“ Am I planted in the House of the Lord by his Almighty hand ? ”*

EPE. Cherish conviction. Quench not the Spirit. It is certain that every blossom does not produce fruit : but it is equally certain that devoid of blossoms there can

be no fruit. Defend then the blossoms of holiness. Shelter them from the destructive blasts of temptation, persecution, and reproach. Strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die. By a particular examination of their quality, enquire also into the origion from whence they have sprung. For, if these have sprung from temporary emotions, they will suddenly decay : but if they have sprung from the heavenly seed of the word, then they shall produce the fruits of holiness. And these fruits terminate in eternal glory. For Inspiration calls this seed, ' the incorruptible seed of the word, which abideth, and remaineth for ever.'

ELE. I would fondly hope that this divine seed has been sown in my mind. The manner in which this was accomplished is more difficult to describe. I can however say, that a late sickness brought me seemingly to the gates of death. The fear of death roused me to thoughtfulness. I meditated on my former ways. The reflection filled my soul with the most acute pain and anguish. I began to cry for mercy, and bitterly bewailed my past conduct. The thought of my past crimes, of my present situation, of the awful nature of death, and of an approaching judgment, combined to rouse my soul. Then a thousand worlds would have been cheerfully given for a restoration of health, and a prolonging of life. Kind heaven was pleased to grant this high favor. No sooner was strength renewed to walk abroad, then I repaired to the church. That day you preached upon the character and fate of a wicked person. To me that sermon was eminently blessed. Previous to my illness I was inattentive to the concerns of my soul. But, my anxiety being roused by sickness, I came that day to the church with earnest desires after salvation. By the kindness of God, the word came with power to my conscience. It was more strongly roused. I hope I can say that my heart was opened like Lydia's * to attend unto the things which were spoken. Listening to the truths of the gospel, my

understanding was more fully informed of my sad state;—informed that the character of a wicked person was that of mine. That I had been ushered into the world with an heart full of enmity to God, and with dispositions inclining me to all manner of vice. That my heart was full of malicious dispositions similar to the Wicked One. That these had exerted themselves in conduct similar to his. That, like a child imitating a father, my conduct had been an imitation of the Father of lies. The description given brought my youthful crimes into sad remembrance. Parental admonitions slighted,—godly example misimproved,—numerous mercies abused, and numerous crimes committed. Bitter was the recollection of the moments spent in the company of the dissolute and the profane. Doleful was the echo of my horrid oaths. Dismal the sound of my vile conversation, and my scoffing at sacred things. Galling was the remembrance of profaned Sabbaths. The loss of the consecrated moments pierced my soul with tenfold sorrow. To enumerate my feelings in that hour is quite impossible. It can only be said, that all my crimes were marshalled up to view, and each one, with a voice more piercing than thunder, denounced the just vengeance of God against my enormous crimes. Oh Sir, my soul trembles at the recollection of these things.

EPE. I hope however that you have trembled, that you may rest in the day of trouble. O how wondrous and how various are the ways of the divine Spirit! Sometimes he introduces into the family of God by means of the manifestation of the truth unto the conscience; sometimes by the alarming dispensations of Providence; blessing personal, domestic, or relative affliction for the salvation of the soul. Not unfrequently, also, the still, silent, influence of a godly education, and the continued use of the means of grace, are blessed to produce holiness. In some of these instances, His operations are more obvious and strong, in others less vigorous and evident.

evident. Often they may not be fully evident, neither to the happy individual herself, nor to her companions. But pray, may I ask you, How is your mind *now* affected? Have you obtained calmness of soul? And can you ascertain how you have obtained it?

ELE. My mind is greatly calmed. — But it is difficult to say how that peace was obtained. I can only say, that, in consequence of what was then experienced, salvation was no longer deemed a matter of indifference. On the contrary it was esteemed *the one thing needful*. My soul sought hard after God. I most ardently sought after faith in the Son of God,—by anxious and diligent reading of the sacred Oracles,—by constant attendance upon the preaching of the word,—by fervent prayer,—by frequenting the company of the godly, and learning of them the ways of the Lord. Observing this line of conduct, my mind gradually obtained relief, and the keen anguish of my soul was removed. Still however my concern is great, respecting the consequences.

EPE. But does your heart now glow with sincere love to all the human race? Do you not wish that all your friends and companions may obtain salvation, and be rescued from misery?

ELE. Yes, Sir, now I can cordially forgive the most inveterate foe. Now I feel my heart glowing with sincere affection towards the whole human race. My wish for all is, that they may glorify the God of heaven, and that they may be saved.

EPE. May I now enquire how your mind is disposed respecting the important duty of prayer? Are you favored with ardor and with boldness? Is your heart enlarged? Have you liberty to make your requests known with joy? Are you freed from that stupidity and formal languor which often hover over the mind? Is your soul deeply impressed with a sense of the Being and perfections of God? Do you ever feel any thing similar to that boldness of Jacob, when, in wrestling with the angel of the Covenant, he said unto God, I will not let thee go except thou bless me?

ELE. Ah Sir, my experience does not reach to that height ! Jacob was many years a wrestler at the throne of grace, before he obtained power to prevail with the Angel.

EPE. True, but can you say, that he was an aged wrestler when he obtained the vision of the angels in the desert? and when in holy extasy and joy he exclaimed, saying, ' Surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it ' not, this is none other than the house of God, and the ' very gate of Heaven?' He was then a young believer. He was also in a situation the most trying both to humanity and to grace. The sword of an only brother forced him to flee from his father's house, and the land of his nativity. He was journeying through a waste howling wilderness to a foreign land. Scarcely were the mournful wailings of his fond parents upon his departure, silent in his ears, when the roaring of the devouring beasts of the desert commenced. Overwhelmed with anxious dread he past the first day. Vanquished with sorrow, and worn out with grief and fatigue, at night he lay down to sleep. The cold earth his bed. The hard stones his pillow. But in such a place, and in such a situation he was blessed with that signal display of divine favor. God blesses in the day of calamity. He approaches the soul in the desert of adversity. When the head is lying on the stony pillow of adversity, the visions of heaven are granted. The God of Jacob is in a peculiar manner the God of the young sufferer. He often deals bountifully with young saints. He carries the lambs in his bosom. He admits them into his secret counsels, and warms them with his peculiar love. ' The secret of the Lord is with them who fear, and unto them will he manifest his Covenant.' Parental care is chiefly tendered towards the youngest. In how much greater abundance doth the tender care of the Father of mercies flow towards his young ones, who have newly given themselves to him in a perpetual covenant. What is the affection of an earthly parent, compared to that of the great Parent of the Universe?

ELE. Good cause have I to praise him for his kindness towards my soul. For though I cannot venture to say much, yet I will say, that he hath been merciful unto me. I trust that he hath heard my prayer, and enlarged my heart. And though at times deadness prevails over me, yet at other times, I am enabled to make my requests known with joy;—to wrestle for my pardon;—to long for holiness;—to thirst for communion. And Oh Sir, were I admitted to partake of the Lord's supper, I hope my conscience would be quite calmed, and my soul pacified.

EPE. The history you have given, will I hope render it no difficult matter to permit you to participate of that ordinance. Let me, however, guard my friend against a very great mistake which she is about—

ELE. What, Sir, a great mistake! Pray what is that? My great anxiety to be kept from such a thing, has emboldened me to interrupt you. Pray deal candidly with me, and prevent me from any mistake concerning a work of such vast importance.

EPE. The mistake is this, that you said, "were you admitted to the table of the Lord, that would calm your conscience." But I am sorry that I cannot presently show the nature of this mistake, because some other persons are waiting; but please call upon me again as soon as convenient, and I shall endeavour to show you the nature thereof.

ELE. My anxiety, Sir, will induce me soon to see you again. Nor must I at present murmur. Those who are waiting stand perhaps in equal need of your admonitions and instructions.

"Bear us above all doubts and fears:

"Thy special love make known,

"Then shall we present things despise,

"And live by faith alone."—

DIA-

DIALOGUE SECOND,

BETWEEN

THE SAME PERSONS.

Go forth O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

SONG of SOLO. iii. 11.

EPENETUS. **I** AM happy to see you. I hope all things have been prosperous respecting your spiritual concerns since I had the pleasure of seeing you last.

ELENORA. Oh Sir, I have experienced, the greatest concern about what you mentioned in the conclusion of our last conversation. This is the cause why I have troubled you so soon again, at such a time, when the care of others as well as myself so frequently occupies your attention before the solemn service. I have revolved in my mind your saying, "that it was a great mistake to expect that coming to the Lord's table, would calm my conscience and afford peace to my mind." O Sir, I cannot yet perceive why this may not be obtained, and why it is not a very proper motive to induce one to come to that solemn feast.

EPE. You may be certain, Madam, that nothing but a sense of the duty incumbent upon me to *all my bearers alike*, would have induced me to send you away with such an anxious mind. With an error mentioned without being considered, and the remedy pointed out. A state of doubt, and of suspense is a very painful one to
the

the human mind. A keen restlessness, without being able to obtain any solid satisfaction, is very unpleasant. Nay, when satisfaction is not obtained, the anxiety of mind is increased. I am sorry to learn that such has been your state of mind; and that, in reflecting upon what was mentioned, you have not observed where the error exists. It is but too common a mistake, my friend, for persons to approach the table of the Lord with the view of *calming their consciences*. The following remarks however may show that it is, in a certain degree, a wrong motive. Conscience, you know, is that active discerning principle of the human mind, which approves of those actions it deems good, and condemns those it judges evil. Like all the other powers of the soul, this principle is vitiated and enfeebled: yet it is the most active, and the most vigorous, of a virtuous nature, remaining in depraved man. Next to God, conscience is the best acquainted with the human character: and next to God, the severest avenger of wrong. Nothing previous to endless torments is more dreadful than an awakened conscience. In company she secretly stings the guilty. In the hour of external mirth, she silently approaches to torture the mind, and to embitter all joy. In the hour of solitude she also wrecks her vigorous fury. Nor doeth she retire in the hour of affliction, but renders affliction tenfold painful. 'A man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?' Who can bear the reproaches of conscience, and her dreadful forebodings of coming vengeance?

ELE. But, Sir, when the conscience is thus alarmed, and produces such an insupportable pain, ought not the best of remedies to be used in order to obtain peace? And since the Lord's supper occupies a superior rank in this respect, ought not one to hasten there, in order to obtain consolation?

EPE. That in such a situation, the most powerful means should be used to remove anxiety and dread, will be readily granted: but this will not argue in behalf of improper

improper means. For, if improper means are used, the case of the soul will be rendered worse than before. It is certain, that, when once the conscience is properly alarmed with an apprehension of guilt, the soul can have no rest. And there is only one of two ways in which conscience can be silenced. Either by obtaining peace from the influence of Christ's blood applied by the divine Spirit; or by a fatal repetition of crimes, blunting the keen edge of conviction, and benumbing the mental powers. For either the person whose conscience hath been once thoroughly awakened must abandon the paths of folly, or become tenfold more vicious than before. Nay more, by a repetition of crimes conscience may be silenced, and rendered so callous to every impression, that she may for the present give little anxiety: but she will certainly awake, and in proportion to the violence done her, she will harass and torture with double fury. Should not this happen before, nor even in the hour of death, it certainly will the very next step after death, and, in yonder region of unalleviated anguish, prove 'the worm which dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched.' These considerations render it a matter of the very greatest importance, how they act, who have had their conscience awakened; and what means they use in order to obtain peace. Not a few run to the performance of duty for ease. But this is only—

ELE. My anxiety respecting this matter is the cause why I have been so rude as to interrupt you. But pray, Sir, in what way can peace possibly be obtained, if not in the performance of duty.

EPE. The performance of duty is unquestionably to be used in order to calm an awakened conscience: but it is not that which doeth actually produce peace. It is only the way to lead to the city of refuge. Now you know, that safety and rest to the man who slew his brother unawares, were not to be obtained in the way to the ancient city of refuge, *but only within the walls of that city*. Should he have mistaken the way which led to
the

the city of refuge, he never could have arrived in that city? Did he remain in the road, he never would have been saved from the pursuing sword? In a similar manner, conscience cannot obtain rest without using the appointed means; but if she rests in these alone, she will not find it. The performance of duty is the way; but by faith in Christ *alone*, peace is obtained to a guilty conscience. He *alone* is the hope set before us in the gospel. 'He' *alone* 'is our peace.' Therefore it is not our expressing love to him in the holy sacrament: but his love shed abroad in our souls by the Holy Ghost which affords solid and permanent peace. 'It is the blood of Christ which sprinkles the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, and which produces joy and peace in believing.' Do you not recollect what our Lord himself says upon this subject, 'come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' To him those burdened with a sense of guilt ought to flee,—thither they are to repair to cast their burden on the Lord. Man ought first to take hold of the strength of Christ by faith, then he will be qualified to perform holy duties, and in so doing he may expect the enjoyment of comfort; but if a man unwisely attempt the performance of duty, *merely* to obtain peace of conscience, and neglect the only way of peace, he will but weary himself for very vanity. Be assured, that it is exceedingly dangerous to seek peace in communicating. Does not this suppose the idea of merit therein. Too many thus imagine. Too many thus attempt to silence their conscience, that so unmolested they may pursue their abominations. But ah, those who approach this sacred table merely to calm their minds, are greatly in danger of returning with a seared instead of an healed conscience. I grant that this solemn ordinance is admirably calculated to comfort the mind: but it must first have obtained rest in union to Christ, where alone the weary find rest. He alone is the physician that heals the wounded in heart. The
everlasting

everlasting Father hath anointed him the Supplier of the various wants of his people. This is beautifully described by Isaiah, in the sixty-first chapter of his prophesy at the beginning, who introduces the glorious Mediator as saying, 'The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.' This passage deserves to be engraven upon every memory. Whether shall we admire the beauty of the composition, or the riches of the consolation contained therein? I doubt not but many have fed plentifully upon the consolation, who have little perceived the beauty of the composition. Here is sufficient however to gratify the most refined taste, and to feed the most famishing heart. 'Blessed are all they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.'

ELE. They are blessed indeed who are longing for the bread of life. But what you have said of the danger in coming to the solemn ordinance to obtain peace to my conscience, affords me much uneasiness, I can easily conceive that it is an improper motive to commemorate the death of Jesus, merely in compliance with example or custom; but it appears more difficult to ascertain how *this* is an erroneous motive. Is not this institution frequently called a nourishing and an invigorating ordinance. Nay, Sir, is not communicating that which you yourself understand, by coming to Christ, and casting the burden of sin upon him?—unloading
one's

one's self of guilt, and trusting in him alone for salvation?

EPE. You will remember I readily admit, that there can be no proper communicating without these things be previously done. Please to recollect, however, that there is an essential difference between the performance of a duty, and that which qualifies for the performance of that duty. Coming to Christ, and receiving pardon, grace, and strength from him, both qualifies to communicate, and also gives a right so to do. But is there not an essential difference between coming to Christ to receive the wedding-garment, and sitting down to feast with him, adorned with that garment? Are not these two separate and distinct actions? And is not the previous doing of the former, essentially necessary to the proper doing of the latter? You remember the fate of him who came to the marriage of the King's Son without a wedding-garment. What befel him, loudly calls upon all to be particularly careful how they conduct themselves respecting this holy ordinance. Verily 'the King will come in to see the guests. His eyes are as a flame of fire.' To him all hearts are manifest.

ELE. Oh, Sir, your sayings produce greater anxiety in my mind than ever, and deter me from this ordinance.

EPE. This was not intended; but you know that it is my duty to deal faithfully. It is only intended to guard you from misapprehensions of this sacrament, and to rescue you from that snare into which many have wilfully fallen.

ELE. Your kindness is great, and merits more gratitude than I can express. What you have said has carried conviction to my mind; and will I hope be singularly beneficial to my soul. But pray, add to your former kindness an explanation of what is understood by the wedding-garment, which you say is so essential-

H

ly

ly necessary in order to proper communicating, that I may receive a more distinct idea of this important duty.

EPE. Your request is proper, and since this is not the hour of compliment, but of instruction, it shall be cheerfully complied with.

Revelation declares, that man once was adorned with the robes of righteousness and of innocence. That then he enjoyed the sweet communion of God. Sin however stripped him of these unfulfilled robes, and clothed him with filthy garments. Sin filled his mind with enmity to God, and depraved all the powers of his soul. By sin, darkness beclouded his understanding. His will became perverse. His affections were alienated from holiness. In such a condition man is unqualified for communion with God. He cannot have fellowship with iniquity. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. But, that forlorn man might not be forever debarred the presence of his Maker, the Son of the Highest by his express and direct appointment arrayed himself in the humble garments of humanity, that he might purchase eternal communion for the faithful. He obeyed and died, that the guilty descendants of Adam might be 'clothed with the garments of salvation, 'and covered with the robe of righteousness.' Such is the adorning suitable to this sacred feast. An interest in Christ, and an actual participation of pardon and of holiness, compose the wedding-garment.

ELE. Now, Sir, I understand that the possession of pardon, and of holiness are necessary in order to worthy communicating, and in order to solid and permanent peace of mind. But Oh ! how may I know assuredly that I am pardoned, so that I may ascend the hill of God, and stand with acceptance in his holy place.

EPE. Numerous are the evidences of the reception of pardon, however difficult it may be for the individual to arrive at comfortable certainty. But if the life which you now live in the flesh, be by the faith of the son of God;—if you are walking by faith and not by sight;—if you are ingenuously humbled because
of

of sin, daily mourning for it, carefully avoiding every appearance of evil, conscientiously performing all known duty, increasing both in love to God, and to all the sharers of humanity ; and are also more and more growing in holiness, then the evidence is clear that you have tasted the sweets of pardon. Nor are these assertions unsubstantiated by the sacred Oracles. These declare, that the sons of pardon ' walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.' That they are dead to sin, and alive to righteousness. That they who are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with ~~its~~ affections and lusts. That all men know that they are the disciples of Jesus, because they love one another. That this love is taught them of God. That the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them. That they delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man. That they have a respect unto all the commandments of God ; and that, in the sincerity of their souls, they walk humbly with God. Such is the character given in the sacred writings of the faithful.

ELE. From some of these marks I would fondly draw comfort, though I cannot from them all. O how little do I grieve for sin ! how weak and feeble is my faith ! and how much is my mind engrossed with things which are seen and temporal ! How proud is my vicious heart ! How easily betrayed into sin ! How many vain thoughts lodge within ! O how remiss in duty, even amid all my anxiety about salvation ! How feeble the ardor of my love to God ! O that I could love God more, and that the Savior were more precious in mine eyes ! O that I could cordially say, ' Christ is altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousand.'

EPE. Be not dejected. God will not despise the day of small things ; nor quench the smoking flax. He will cause it to ascend into a vehement flame. The smallest spart of divine love is the work of the Spirit, and wherever he begins a good work, he will carry it on until the day of Christ. Be not afraid, only believe.

Daily supplicate the Hearer of prayer, saying, 'Lord increase my faith.' Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. How? not by an indolent, and an impious prying into secret things, which belong *only* to God, but by a constant, diligent, humble, and persevering use of appointed means, labor to say from experience, 'I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed unto him against that day.' The wondrous act of God's eternal love to the soul is manifested by its being enabled to bring forth the fruits of holiness. Yes, an holy life is the certain proof of God's distinguishing love. By this alone shall men know that they are the called according to his purpose. By the quality of the streams, imperfect mortals are to ascertain the fountain from whence they flow. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ assures us, that he hath chosen believers in Christ Jesus before the world began, not because of their foreseen faith or good works, but for the express purpose 'that they should be holy and without blame before him in love.' Be it then your care to cultivate holiness. Be holy as God is holy. Fight the good fight of faith. Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Neither fail nor be discouraged. He that endureth unto the end shall be saved. Nor are you called to a warfare upon your own charges. Every thing is provided for the christian warrior. Put on therefore the whole armor of God. War a good warfare; your cause is the best, and the most ample honors await. God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, and labor of love. One day you shall receive the palm of victory. Endless pleasures are reserved in heaven for the righteous. There they shall be placed beyond the reach of sin, of sorrow, of crying, and of pain. But frequently also believers enjoy blessed foretastes of these joys at a communion table. O what meltings of heart are experienced in beholding the love of Jesus! What ardent longings after holiness! What ravishing pleasures
and

and joys are experienced, when Jesus is pleased to make himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread ! Come then, with an enlarged heart, to the table of the Lord, and may you be abundantly refreshed with the blessings of holy communion. And may you be fortified against all the snares and temptations to which your age and sex are exposed ; and kept by the almighty power of God through faith unto eternal salvation.

-
- “ **R**ICHES of mercy, precious gifts,
 “ Are promis’d by the Lord,
 “ And to his chosen ones secur’d
 “ By his unchanging word.
 “ Well suited to his people’s need.
 “ These friendly graces shine ;
 “ But of diffusive gen’ral use,
 “ None more than *faith* divine.
 “ Their hearts that often sinking are
 “ And faint thro’ various grief,
 “ By *faith* he raises ; and in midst
 “ Of trouble gives relief.
 “ When conscience charges home the guilt,
 “ Which they can ne’er remove,
 “ *Faith* covers all beneath the shade
 “ Of bleeding, dying, love.
 “ Believing that their dearest Lord
 “ For them endur’d the shame,
 “ They welcome scorn, and to reproach
 “ With joy give up their name.
 “ Tho’ dark and tiresome is their way,
 “ And spread with many snares ;
 “ In confidence of promis’d light,
 “ *Faith* dissipates their fears.
 “ Like wave on wave, from ev’ry hand
 “ While heavy tidings roll,
 “ Firm trust in all sufficient aid,
 “ Unmov’d preserves the soul.”

A LETTER TO A LADY,
ENDEAVOURING TO DESCRIBE
The proper EXERCISES of DEVOTION in com-
memorating the Death of Jesus.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

ISA. lxi. 10.

Dear MADAM, THE intelligence respecting your happiness, and that of your family, afforded me the highest satisfaction. Of all that prosperity which attends our friends, a large portion is experienced by a generous mind. Nor is it easy to determine how near that may approach to the pleasure of actual enjoyment. Sure I am, Madam, that you are no stranger to this feeling, and your pen could give a more accurate and lively description thereof. Mine can only give the rude sketch. This feeling, however, which is so pleasant when operating concerning temporal things, must have a double relish when operating concerning the interests of eternity. Is our joy increased or diminished in proportion to the value of the occurrences? Sure then, no temporal prosperity can equal spiritual prosperity. What are all the things connected with time, compared with those connected with eternity? They are less than nothing and vanity. Therefore, I hope, I will be excused in saying, that the late alteration in your spiritual condition, hath conveyed more exquisite joy to my mind, than all the large addition that you have received to your fortune.

fortune. The latter is exposed to a thousand accidents. Riches may take to themselves wings and fly away. Sickness and pain may soon render you unqualified to enjoy their pleasure. Death may suddenly snatch you from them. The great foe may be drawing his bow in the dark, while your breast heaves with grateful joy upon the late kindness of Providence. The congratulations of a numerous acquaintance upon this event may soon be turned into lamentations. But, by the change in your spiritual condition, you have, I hope, obtained an inheritance which shall never be taken away,—an inheritance which bids defiance to robbery or wasting time,—an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away ;—nay, an inheritance of which *the present earnest* is the indwelling of the blessed Spirit. Permit me, therefore, while others are pouring forth their adulation and unmeaning compliments, to entreat that, whilst you cherish emotions of gratitude towards the Ruler of events, you be also clothed with humility. What if the enemy gain an advantage over you by this prosperous occurrence? Prosperity is trying to holiness. The gales of prosperity are more dangerous to the believer than the blasts of adversity. It hath seemed good unto the Most High, to give both your faith and humility a very early trial. What ! Scarcely begun to experience the operations of the divine Spirit ; when lo, a prosperous gale of Providence beats full upon you. Stand firm. Remember the instability of earthly things. Fix your attention upon the internal state of your mind, and be indifferent to external things. Fully convinced that external objects make a strong impression upon the mind, be more abundantly careful to guard the heart. Be deaf to the voice flattery ;—blind to the splendor of riches ; taste not, handle not, too rashly the pleasures provided, lest they ensnare the soul, and blunt your relish for celestial enjoyments.

It

It appears a kind occurrence in Providence that the sacrament of the Lord's supper is so nigh at hand. This is a strengthening and a fortifying ordinance. Here the babes in Christ obtain milk to invigorate their spiritual constitution. By the most enlivening and invigorating displays of the loving kindness and tender care of the God of love they are fortified against all the power of the enemy. Nor could few things afford me more pleasure than to hear that you are so anxious and so much afraid of miscarrying in that holy and solemn work. The whole of your kind epistle breathes this spirit: and particularly the question respecting that precise manner in which one ought to be exercised at the table of the Lord.

With the candor of a sincere friend I shall humbly proceed to give my thoughts upon this question. "May the Searcher of all hearts guide my feeble pen, and render it both fruitful and steady."

Every moment of time is precious; the moments of communicating are peculiarly so. Much is to be done, if much is to be received. God is there. He comes to see the guests. He comes to discern between the precious and the vile. Nor can *one* escape his all penetrating eye. He comes to feed his own. He knows all their wants. Not one of them shall lack their food. He hath promised to give each his portion in due season. For all these things, however, he will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. Hence active, indeed, should be the operations of that hour. Rapidly should the heart and dispositions be reviewed, lest there dwell within any thing to offend the Holy One of Israel. The avenues of the soul are to be strictly guarded, in order to discover the approach of the robbers of spiritual joy. The various graces of the divine Spirit should spring forth in lively and in vigorous exercise, to wait upon the King, the Lord of hosts. With a lightning glance the mind should fly over the field of revealed truth, in order to obtain materials both for con-
templation

temptation and for praise. The vigorous powers of the soul should exert their full strength, and, by the ardent aspirations of faith, take hold of the strength of Jesus, that so the mind may be qualified to obtain an united view of divine information. That by this the various beams of revelation may at once irradiate the soul. That with each of these, which shine from every part of the redeeming scheme, the eternal love of God to perishing sinners may appear in the full view of the mind. That so, while the light of truth shineth upon the understanding, and the Son of righteousness, in all his splendor and fructifying virtue, arises with healing under his wings, the communicant may exult, and may also grow and *increase with all the increase of God*. That he may experience a growth in holiness in one hour similar to the growth of many years. What cannot the Son of Righteousness effectuate? Suddenly he can cause the soul to grow up unto eternal life. A nation can be born in one day. A soul can be ripened for heaven in one communion hour. In one happy hour the graces implanted by the mighty hand of the Spirit may be made so strong, as to smile at the impetuous blasts of temptation, persecution, and reproach. Nay in one hour made so vigorous, that the child becomes a man of years in wisdom, in prudence, in faith, in hope, in love, and in holy zeal. In this happy frame, and in the enjoyment of these things what views of the love of God in sending his Son to die for men are obtained! That love which induced God from eternity to destine his own Son to such exquisite sufferings, and made him to pour such unallayed vengeance upon him, that men might be saved. What transporting views of the love of the Son, in descending on the wings of unequalled love to save a perishing world. Yea, in the very moment when they were about to sink eternally into the pit of destruction, he cried, saying, 'deliver them from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom.'

How pleasant the reflection that he should condescend to

to come to this lower region, to go about to do good both to the bodies and to the souls of sinful men. Behold him obeying the law, and working out a complete atonement for the faithful. Behold him, if the mind can endure the contemplation, bearing in the garden the awful torrents of divine vengeance in his guiltless soul. Can the mind reflect upon the hill of Calvary without feeling the most ardent love? Behold what love is there displayed, in the sufferings of Jesus! Behold what love streams with every drop of his blood! Every groan is an accent of rich compassion. Every sigh a foundation of rejoicing to the redeemed. Every wound affords a medicine to heal the wounded in spirit. This death is the life of men.

What a rapid and violent glance over this mingled scene, should the mind give at a communion table. O behold what awful severity to the sufferer: but infinite compassion to the saved! Beholding this scene, the divine Perfections begin to smile upon the rebel man, and declare that it is a just and righteous thing with God to justify him that believes in Jesus;—every one who by a true and living faith flies to the cross of Christ for salvation. Sure if ever God smelled a sweet favor upon the offering up of any sacrifice, it was upon the offering which Jesus made of himself for the sins of the faithful. Nay farther, at the actions of that hour all nature feels; and hard and unfeeling must be that heart which upon the reflection does not exquisitely and keenly feel.

But the merciful acts of the Holy Ghost also fill with wonder at a communion table. Who are these that are here? They are the very same who were lately seated at the banquet of dissipation and who joined in the song of the drunkard. 'But now they are washed, now they are justified; now they are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' Oh what wonders of sovereign grace are here! Each one a wonder, and each one deeming himself a greater wonder

der than another. Each one saying, 'What am I, O Lord, and what is my father's house, that thou shouldst have brought me hitherto? Surely, O Lord, this is not the manner of men! Thy ways are far above man's ways, and thy thoughts above his thoughts. Thy mercy O Lord is above the heavens, thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.'

The mind will also reflect upon the sad situation before mercy was displayed :

" Hark, how the tender lambs bewail
 " Their base, their vile original ;
 " In youthful tears their grief express,
 " Complaining sad of foul distress."

The mind will look back with exultation and praise upon the danger from whence it hath escaped. And every reflection upon the way, the accidental circumstances, the means, and the blissful consequences of conversion, all crowd into the soul, and fill it with an extasy of admiration, love, gratitude, and praise ;—nay fill with emotions not more pleasant than they are inexpressible. No language can describe the rapid flow of the emotions, the violence and ardor of the feelings, —the exertions of the understanding,—the volitions of the will,—the total involving of the mind in the flame of devotion. But Oh, Madam, the hour of communicating is in an especial manner the hour of prayer. Then the mind ardently supplicates for friends, for family, for near connections, for the whole church of God, for the ministers of the sanctuary, for the a world lying in wickedness, for enemies that they may be forgiven, and that their hearts may be melted into tenderness and love. Prayer is also to be made for strength to endure the whole will of God, and in a particular manner for grace to endure in the hour of death ;—in that hour which will try every man who dwelleth upon the earth. In such highly favored moments it is a precious time
 to

to prepare for death ;—to arm against the mighty foe. Not unfrequently at a communion table God hath granted such foretastes of heaven, and such preludes of victory over all the power of the enemy, as hath caused the soul to exult, even in the view of death. Thus honored, what transporting views are afforded of the glories and the pleasures of heaven ! By faith the soul penetrates the upper region, and there gazes upon the glories and splendor of that happy place ;—that place where every heart is filled with love, and every tongue is employed in praise.

Thus favored, no wonder that the soul exclaims, ‘ Lord it is good for me to be here.’ No marvel that reluctantly the favored one departs from that holy place. No wonder he ardently wish to detain the flying moments of that hour. But ah ! the time of departing hastens. Already the servant of the Lord is administering the departing admonition. Already he is begun to remind communicants that they are now again to enter upon the field of battle and the scene of action ; and therefore that it is proper they should arm against danger, and provide against the calls of duty. Hence, with equal vigor, and with equal rapidity, the soul endeavors to take hold of all that spiritual provision which appears necessary, whether for defence or support. Then desires ascend in clouds, and with pressing ardor. The exertions of faith become tenfold strong and numerous. The flames of love roll from that heart which was cold and languid when ascending the hill of communion. These vehement flames lessen for the moment the love of the world and of all earthly objects, so that the various feelings of the soul cry out, saying, ‘ Whom have I in heaven but God, neither is there any on earth that I desire besides him. O Lord thou art my God ; early will I seek thee ; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and parched land where no water is ;’—where no refreshing streams of consolation flow to refresh my parched heart. In such a moment
the

the walls of division are overleaped. The love of the party lost in the love of the whole. Then love to all men is sincerely felt. Then all injuries are forgotten. The forgiveness shown by God evinces that all which man can be called to forgive is less than nothing. And the more exquisite our enjoyments are at a communion-table, the nearer will they approach to the enjoyments of heaven, where unquestionably all differences shall be forgotten, all animosities laid aside, and all distinctions annihilated. To one Lord they shall sing, and to one Mediator give praise. O that this pleasant truth were realized by the man, who, wedded to a sect or party, would deprive others of the joys of the heavenly paradise, because they worship not upon *his mountain*: Dear Madam, when the soul of the righteous is so often grieved and so sorely vexed because of differences here below, what a pleasant thought that none of these failings and imperfections shall accompany the sons of God to their Father's house! Here they may be separated by time or by place; and in the wisdom of God they are so, until their hearts obtain time to reflect, their wrath to spend itself, or grace to subdue corruption. But in heaven they are all to remain in one society. Should therefore any discord enter that region, what would be the sad effect? It would convert the mansion of bliss into a region of anguish and sorrow. Oh that both you and I may now speedily imbibe the Spirit of heaven! May you at the table of the Lord experience such pleasures, and be guided and led into green pastures, and beside the still waters. May you be made exceeding glad in the temple of God. May you have more joy and gladness put into your mind than it hath felt upon the late accession to your fortune: That so you may say, O Lord, Thou hast put more joy and gladness into mine heart, than the men of this world experience when their corn, and wine, and oil do most abound. And may you fortified to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, for you know,

Madam, that Jesus requires all his followers to be warriors. No sex is exempted from the christian war. Therefore in the view of the field of battle and the tempests of the world be active at a communion-table. Nor will my friend conclude, that though I have freely delivered these few thoughts upon the exercise proper for commemorating the death of Christ, that I aver that such is always the case with *all* believers, and that it is so upon all occasions even with them who may have experienced enjoyments similar to those now mentioned. I have 'only sketched out what may be supposed the exercise of a soul that is favored with the preparation of the heart, which is only from the Lord, and who is brought into the banqueting-house, and hath the banner of love spread over him. Should it be asserted, that this is the uniform experience of the godly at the table of the Lord, it would offend the generation of the righteous. Such however may be the case, and we ought to press forward to perfection. Nor can it be denied that this ordinance is calculated to raise to such high enjoyment.

But a calm, silent, and solid beholding of the Redeemer's amazing love in dying for sinners, accompanied with affecting thoughts of sin, are the effect of as real communion with God, as if the extasy of soul surpassed even that of an angel. Rapturous emotions are chiefly experienced by young communicants. Those who have long flourished in the courts of God are often glad, simply to know that their desire is towards God and the remembrance of his name. But in this, Madam, all christians agree, that high enjoyment is greatly desirable and vastly sweet. May you have a large share of holy joy, and be abundantly refreshed in the temple of God.—Before I close my letter allow me to send you a copy of a hymn

ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

WHENCE is this table richly spread?
What guests are here to share?

Does God, inviting angels high,
For them this feast prepare?

Nay, sure, for perfect innocence
No welcome here is found;
But blind, and maim'd, and guilty souls
This table must surround.

Then I'll go forward, guilty I!
And humbly take my place:
Now screen my soul! O wrap me Lord,
In thine own *Righteousness*:

Under this spotless robe secure,
Thy sinful child shall lie!
Nor need to tremble at th' approach
Of HOLY MAJESTY.

This perfect robe, delightful news!
Was finish'd by the Lord;
Finish'd for us, my fellow guests;
So runs his faithful word.

His oath confirms what he hath spoke,
And here's his seal and sign;
'This broken bread my body is,
'My blood, this flowing wine.'

Kindly he calls us now to take
These symbols, and believe;
'Stretch forth your hands, my needy friends,
'And a whole Christ receive.'

Lo, then, I take a broken Christ,
Broken, he says, for me;
From his dear hand the cup I drink,
That seals my liberty.

This blood removes the awful curse,
That bound me down to hell ;
And blessings purchas'd, far beyond
What angels' tongues can tell.
Eternal freedom, by his death,
My captive soul obtains ;
Now hell, and sin, and conquering grave,
Where are your pow'rful chains ?
Come, let us all this bread and wine
Amongst ourselves divide :
A lasting sign of union sweet,
In him who lov'd and died.
Henceforth let kindred love prevail,
And friendship stand confest,
Nor other strife 'mongst us appear,
But who shall serve him best.
From strength to strength, as on we go,
His name we'll ever bliss,
Who thus restores our fainting hearts,
Here in the wilderness.
And this dear pledge of Jesus' love,
Tho' scorn'd by *thoughtless men*,
We will from age to age transmit,
Till he return again.

This hymn appeared to me so much adapted to the subject of my letter that I could not forbear transcribing it. " May you in reading feel some of
" the pious feelings of him who composed it, and may
" this and every other mean tend more and more to
" inflame your heart with love to him that lov'd
" and died." I remain,

Dear Madam, yours affectionately.

* * * *

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

ELEVATUS returning from the Table of the Lord rejoicing, and DEPRESSUS returning dejected.

I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste. He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love.

SONG of SOLO. ii. 3, 4.

I will seek him whom my soul loveth ; I sought him, but I found him not.

— iii. 2.

ELEVATUS. **D**EAR friend, this is a beautiful day in the heavens, and I hope also a glorious day of the Son of Man. In commemorating the death of Jesus, many I hope have this day sat under his shadow with great delight, and have found his fruit sweet unto their taste,

DEPRESSUS. They are happy who have been thus highly favored, but such is not the case with all who have been there. Though this day be clear and shining, it is truly a dark and gloomy day to my soul.

ELE. Why, my dear friend, what is the cause of your sorrow ? May I not ask why art thou sad, being the King's son ? Why come away from such pleasant work with a heart heaving with sorrow, and with eyes bathed in tears ? Ought not all rather to retire from that solemn service rejoicing and glad in heart, for all the goodness that the Lord hath shewed towards the

house of Adam in sending his *own Son* to die for men?

DEP. Oh my friend, there is a vast difference between what one should do, and what one finds himself enabled to do. The temper of mind with which a person retires from the sacred table will be influenced in a great measure by his enjoyments there. Present enjoyment is influenced by present feeling. Hath he seen the King in his beauty, with his countenance smiling upon him, and hath he by a vigorous faith obtained a sight of the land that is afar off, and also of his right to that heavenly inheritance, then he will return exulting and glad in heart. Hath Jesus, by the strong and lively impressions of his love, been known to him in the breaking of bread, then his heart may well leap for joy. Who would not rejoice upon hearing Jesus saying, in language which admits of no doubt to the mind, Fear not, I am become thy salvation? I have redeemed thee, thou art mine. I have engraven thee upon the palms of mine hands. I will be with thee in all the way, and I will not leave thee until I have performed all that which I have promised. Can one hear Jesus saying such things and not be glad and rejoice? Impossible. But on the contrary, my friend, how can he who hath scarcely felt any emotions of love towards the Savior?—he whose soul was dull and languid, and who hath experienced no sensible token of pardon?—how can he come away rejoicing? Can that heart refrain from sorrow which hath been panting after communion with God, but hath not found it? Can a sorrowful heart rejoice? Can a bitter fountain send forth sweet streams?

ELE. But sure it hath not been so with Depressus. What! Hath not Jesus been set forth crucified before you? Have not the memorials of his dying love been put into your hands! Hath not Jesus appeared travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save? Nay able to save to the very uttermost all who come
unto

unto him? What! Have not these things a force to quicken the languid soul? Have not these things a power to raise emotions of gratitude, of love, and of joy in the human mind? Is not the Lord's supper a memorial of distinguished victory over enemies? Who then would not exult on the day of victory—a victory in which we are all so deeply interested? Why then be dejected or cast down? Why thus mournful and dispirited? No sorrow is innocent—at the Lord's table, but sorrow for sin. The sons of Jacob eat the passover with bitter herbs. The sons of Jesus should also keep their passover with bitter regrettings because of sin. The bitter tears of genuine repentance give a double relish and sweetness to the communion cup.

DEP. Can my mind be cheerful, when I am still fearful whether or not I have yet experienced the mercy and the grace of the Most High in the renovation of my heart?

ELE. I am little qualified to guide the footsteps of the youngest of Christ's flock; however, should not you remember that there is a material difference between experiencing the grace of God, and always experiencing the smiles of his countenance. Proper communicating and the visible displays of pardon are *not invariably* connected. In writing to the Corinthian church Paul plainly insinuates, that one may be a true believer, yet partake of the Lord's supper in such a manner as shall not be for his comfort. It is evident that in the conclusion of the eleventh chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, his intention was to rectify some abuses which had been introduced into that church concerning the celebration of the Lord's supper. First he simply narrates the original institution of that sacrament by our Lord. Next he gives a solemn charge to every man, saying, 'but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup: for, saith he, the man that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not

‘not discerning the Lord’s body. Then he adds, ‘for this *cause* many are weak and sickly *among you*, and ‘many sleep.’ From what is here said, it is sufficiently evident, that some among the Corinthian believers not only communicated without comfort, but also in such a manner as drew down fatherly chastisements upon them. How amazing are the deep ways of Providence! For that ample and explicit information which we have in this passage concerning the holy sacrament, we owe in a great degree to the misconduct of that early church. Surely the very folly of man shall praise God, and the devices of Satan tend to the advancement of divine information.

But I farther ask my friend, do not the people of God themselves frequently err and come short in duty? And hath not God said that he will punish the transgressions of his sons and daughters? Should they therefore approach him in a careless and indevout manner; should they be too remiss in duty, or too much captivated with the world, may they not expect to behold Jehovah frowning instead of smiling? He is a holy God, and hateth all manner of sin, even in the redeemed. Here the words of Dr. OWEN, are both applicable and expressive: “Without due apprehensions of the holiness
“of God there is no approaching unto him in his service. The apostle gives a great and plain rule to
“this purpose. *Let us have grace*, saith he, *whereby*
“*we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and*
“*godly fear*. What doeth he propose now as the principal reason why he requires this preparation? *For*
“saith he, *our God is a consuming fire*. What propriety of God is expressed by this word *consuming fire*?
“It is the *holiness of God*, the purity of God’s nature,
“that can bear no corrupt, nor defiled thing. It is
“set forth by that metaphorical expression, *a consuming fire*. As fire is the most pure and unmixed element, and so powerful of itself, as that it will consume and destroy every thing that is not perfectly of
“its

" its own nature ; so is God, saith he, *a consuming fire*,
 " and in all your serving of him, and approaches unto
 " him, labor to obtain a frame of spirit that becomes
 " them who have to do with that God, who is so pure
 " and holy."

Meditating on the nature of God, as a Being of *perfect purity*, may we not say, in the words of David,
 ' Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever ?
 Hence all should be holy who approach him. Can the
 sin even of the religious services of his people obtain
 his approbation ? Is there not sufficient guilt mingled
 with the best of human services to provoke God to
 frown upon man ? Why then be surprised, though we do
 not *always* experience the displays of his favor ? Nay
 rather, may we not wonder that *ever* we should do so
 at all. What is man, O Lord, that thou shouldest be
 mindful of him ? Or what is the son of man that thou
 shouldest at all regard him ? The words of a great divine
 merit your serious consideration. " Persons complain,
 saith he " that in waiting upon God in that ordinance,
 " they do not receive that entertainment at the hand of
 " God, that refreshment which they looked for. They
 " have *more reason* to wonder, that they were not cast
 " out, as those who came without a *wedding-garment*.
 " It is not only required of us, that we come with our
 " *wedding-garment*, which *every believer hath*, but that
 " we come *decked* with this garment."

But allow me farther to remind you, that Jehovah
 is Sovereign in the disposal of his blessings. May he
 not give, and may he not withhold ? Who can constrain
 a King always to show favor ? Why repine though he
 do not daily load with his royal bounty ? What right
 then hath any believer to complain tho' God should hide
 his face from him at his table ? For he is Sovereign in
 the disposal of all his gifts, both temporal and spiritual.
 Therefore my friend should recollect, that this is at
 least possible that such may sometimes be the case, even
 when no remarkable crime stains the character, but only
 for

for the purpose of trying faith, patience, and fortitude. It may also sometimes be, in order that man may the more value God's returning favor.

DEP. I am uncertain what is the cause why God doeth thus frown upon me: But I am too certain of the mournful truth that so it is. My heart hath been hard as a stone. My affections cold and languid, groveling and sensual. My imagination, instead of being keenly employed in contemplating the wonders of redemption, has been wandering after a thousand vanities. Shame would cover my countenance, were I to recount, even to the most intimate friend on earth, the vain thoughts which rolled in my mind in the hour of communicating. I struggled to fix my mind upon the solemn work. I wrestled to turn my meditation to the scheme of redeeming love. But though that field is rich indeed, yet I could find no subject of meditation there to attract my wandering mind. I labored to take hold of the sentiments which dropped from the lips of the servant of the Lord, in order, if possible, to stay my heart. But all in vain. Nay, Sir, even the sight of the symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord could neither fix my attention nor affect my heart. May I not too justly say, 'Surely I am more brutish than any man, and I have not the understanding of a man?'

ELE. Truly, Depressus, your situation is affecting. Every generous and feeling mind must sympathise with you. 'But the heart knoweth its own bitterness,' and to a delicate mind such as yours these things must have produced great anxiety. Disappointment is afflictive to the human mind. The soul goes to the table of the Lord with high expectations of exquisite enjoyment, and when it is otherwise, how distressing to the holy soul? Then the various feelings are sorely pained, and the heart made sad. But why should my friend be so exceedingly sorrowful? May not one have real happiness and true communion though the soul be

not raised to an elevated tone of exultation: and allow me——

DEP. Be not offended at my interruption. Permit me to tell you that when you are experiencing the favor of your God, your mind cannot feel so keenly the sorrows of desertion. But did you feel the exquisite pain of my soul because of the hidings of my Father's face, then you would say that my situation is truly affecting, if not singular.

ELE. That I readily admit. Nor do I know a better way to have these evils removed than by an immediate and a close application to the promises of the gospel, and a steady contemplation of the example and the character of Jesus, in order to obtain aid. This conduct is beautifully described by a private christian in a hymn, intituled,

THE PILGRIM ENCOURAGED.

‘ **I**N your journey to Zion,
 ‘ ‘Midst fighting and pain,
 ‘ ‘Midst trouble surrounding,
 ‘ And guilt still abounding,
 ‘ Discourag’d and fearful you ever remain,
 ‘ And ceaseless from morning to evening complain.
 ‘ Let your eyes then be turned
 ‘ Your Leader to view
 ‘ Thro’ sorrows wide spreading.
 ‘ The wilderness treading,
 ‘ With grief well acquainted, no pleasures he knew,
 ‘ *How powerful shall this be complaints to subdue!*
 ‘ Yet may your soft nature
 ‘ Still plead for excuse;
 ‘ The world still offending,
 ‘ No strength for contending,
 ‘ Sad prospects indulging, you pensively muse,
 ‘ And feeling your weakness, all comforts refuse.
 ‘ But

- ‘ But is there no promise ?
- ‘ Is hope ever gone ?
- ‘ Wou’d ye ay be receiving,
- ‘ And never believing ?
- ‘ Nay, rather self-empty’d, in patience wait on,
- ‘ Your Father will work when you *trust him* ALONE.
- ‘ To his conduct submitting,
- ‘ Your wisdom lay down,
- ‘ Be constantly flying
- ‘ From refuges lying ;
- ‘ Be assur’d he wont hurt you, tho’ seeming to frown ;
- ‘ Your guide he remains all along to the crown.
- ‘ A few stages farther,
- ‘ And the journey is o’er,
- ‘ The days of your mourning,
- ‘ Then never returning ;
- ‘ No fighting, no sinning, nor death any more,
- ‘ But triumphs resounding thro’ yonder blest shore.’

O what a pleasant reflection to the holy soul, when oppressed with the calamities of life, that there remaineth a rest for the people of God beyond the grave ! And how supporting in the mean time, that unto them are given many and precious promises to cheer and to strengthen their hearts : These promises are also exactly suited to the wants of believers. There is no situation in which they can be placed but they will find some one or other of the promises of God exactly adapted to their particular condition. Are we then dejected and cast down, let us flie to the promises, and with them repair to the throne of grace to plead their accomplishment. Is not this the very line of conduct to which the Lord exhorts by the mouth of the prophet Hoseah, 14th chap. 1, 2. ‘ O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God ; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. *Take with you words,* and turn to the Lord, say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously : so will we render the calves of our lips.’

And

And the beneficial effects of such conduct are celebrated in the most affecting and comfortable language. For, saith Jehovah himself, verse fourth, ' I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely : for mine anger is turned away from him : I will be as the dew unto Israel : He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon ; his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return ; they shall revive as the corn ; and grow as the vine : the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols ? I have heard him, and observed him : I am like a green fir tree ; from me is thy fruit found.' Reviewing this beautiful passage. may I not ask, if an ardent address to the throne of grace is not the duty of the disconsolate soul ?—and if he hath not the most abundant cause to hope for spiritual healing, communion, refreshing, reviving, and great increase in holiness ? Yes ; how can man have all his wants supplied, and all his sorrows removed but by fervent prayer to Almighty God ? The heavenly commandment is, ' In every thing by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God. See that you call upon me, in the day of trouble I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' Should not my friend also inquire why the Lord hath thus hid his face ? Why he hath been so fore displeased ? Why he causeth you to go mourning all the day long ? Why he hath not dealt so bountifully with you, as he hath done with some of his people ? An accurate conception of the cause of God's displeasure is the first step to a removal thereof, Therefore, said holy Job, ' Show me wherefore thou contendest with me.'

DEP. Since it appears that the Lord has dealt bountifully with your soul, might I ask you to narrate how God hath dealt with you ? Perhaps the narration may convey some comfort to my disconsolate soul.

ELE. No words, my dear friend, can express the loving kindness of the Lord towards my soul. He made my heart right glad with his favor. ' He brought me into the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love. He stayed me with flaggons, and comforted me with apples. His love was more than wine to my soul. He made himself known in the breaking of bread.' He caused me to experience what was the exceeding greatness of his mercy and of his love;—and strengthened me with all might by his Spirit in the inner man. All the powers of my mind exerted a force and vigor unfelt before. My faith was so strong that I firmly laid hold of Jesus as my Savior and my God. My love was so strong that my heart was entirely inflamed, and my mind wholly enwrapped in the contemplation of the love of God.

DEP. Your mind has been happy. But pray how was it regulated in these moments?

ELE. The preparation of the heart is only from the Lord. In some degree, however, I would humbly and thankfully say this high favor was conferred upon me. I felt uncommon aid in preparing for this solemn service,—felt an uncommon ardor and boldness in prayer. I was particularly elevated in my meditations. The nearer that the happy moments approached, the more vehement were my desires after communion with God. In ascending a communion-table, my affections were all suddenly elevated and inflamed, and all the powers of my soul began to follow hard after God. The wonders of redemption were quickly reviewed. The grace which shone in the whole of that plan admired. My mind with an holy violence laid hold of the promises of the gospel. On them I depended. On the certainty of their accomplishment I rested for the supply of all my wants during my journeyings through this desert unto the land of promise. In a manner which cannot be described, I resigned my soul to the guidance

guidance of the divine Spirit during the remainder of my days. Then all that formerly seemed attractive in a vain world appeared insipid and tasteless. Then, I longed to wing my way to the glorious region of immortality. Then I boldly looked death in the face. Then, undismayed, I surveyed the whole scene of dissolution, and by a glorious anticipation I vanquished the king of terrors. Then, all which lay between me and death seemed less than nothing, so that one day I might come to heaven and receive the crown of glory. Then, I felt joy unspeakable and full of glory. Then, Christ was to me altogether precious, the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. But why do I attempt a description? It is quite impossible to declare the vast blessings which I then enjoyed.

DEP. I give full credit to your report. Permit me however to say, that your description seems little to accord with the *general run* of christian experience, and may it not prove cause of dejection rather than consolation to a numerous class of *real* christians? I am certain that I speak for one.

ELE. It will readily be granted, my friend, that the ways of God with his people are exceedingly various, and it would be dangerous work to measure the experience of *all* the faithful by any *one standard*. The tempers and the countenances of men are not more different than the methods of the Holy Ghost in conducting his charge to the land of glory. It plainly appears "to be his plan in all his dispensations to mingle light "with darkness." Whatever the reasons of this procedure are, the fact is undeniable. Both the works of nature, and the ways of Providence are full of mystery. In the dispensations of the divine Spirit towards the sons of faith there are times of barrenness in comfort. There are times of spiritual joy, yet little holy fruit,—times of dejection and of sorrow that are followed with a rich harvest of holiness. These are happy moments indeed. "There are also times in the lives of pious

“ men, that when sequestered from worldly cares, and
 “ borne up on the wings of divine contemplation, they
 “ rise to a near and transporting view of immortal glory.”
 These are not unfrequently the moments of communicating, although similar moments may be experienced during the other exercises of devotion. But “ such efforts of the mind are rare, and cannot be long supported.” Our spiritual sight is now too feeble to view the celestial glory. The sounds of angelic harmony overpower the enraptured ears. The vigorous wing of contemplation quickly fails, and the spirit of meditation subsides. Frail are the human powers in this lower region.

DEP. But O Elevatus, how transporting are the prospects of the land of glory ! How ravishing to see the King in his beauty ! highly favored man indeed, who hath been thus singularly blessed at the table of the Lord ! O what would a poor afflicted person like me give to have experienced such ravishing pleasures ! O that it were with me as in days which are past ! Time was when I could say, the Lord is my God ! But ah what—

ELE. I must interrupt you. Pray why all this complaining ? Was *ever* the time when you could say of the Lord he was your God, then be assured, you have equal cause to say so *still* ? Know ye not that Jesus resteth in his love : He never will abandon his charge. The mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but his loving kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed, saith the Lord, who hath mercy on thee. God is of *one* mind, and who can change him ?

Be assured, therefore, that if ever there was a period in your life when you could in reality say of the Lord he was your God, thou hast equal cause to say so now. If he was once your portion, he is always your portion. Though a father does not always smile, yet he always remains a father. His frowns do not alter the relation in which he stands to his child. May I not add, that
 his

his frowns do not alter his love. Not unfrequently love is expressed by frowns as well as by smiles from our heavenly Father. However contradictory these things may appear to some, I hope my friend has often felt that the chastisements of heaven have been of singular benefit to the soul. Happy chastisements, which prove the destruction of corruption. The children of God are an afflicted people in this world: but these very afflictions are evidences of their adoption. 'What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?' But still the love and the care of God remain the same. This is beautifully celebrated in a hymn, intituled,

GOD'S UNCHANGEABLE LOVE.

O ZION! afflicted with wave upon wave,
 By no man comforted, whom no man can save!
 By darkness furrounded, by terrors undone;
 In toiling and rowing, thy strength almost gone.
 Thine en'mies are many, thy fears overwhelm,
 But thy blessed Pilot he sits at the helm;
 His wisdom conducts thee, his pow'r thee defends,
 In safety and quiet thy warfare He ends.
 O fearful, O faithless! in mercy he cries,
 My kindness thou doubts of, my promise denies;
 Yet I am still with thee, my promise shall stand;
 Thro' tossing and tempest I'll bring thee to land.
 Forget thee I will not, I cannot; thy name
 Engrav'd on my heart it does ever remain;
 On the palms of my hands, while looking I see
 The wounds I received in dying for thee.
 I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,
 For thou art most near me, my flesh and my bones;
 In all thy distresses, thy Head knows the pain;
 Yet all are most needful, not one is in vain,
 Then trust me, and fear not, thy life is secure;
 My wisdom is perfect, supreme is my pow'r,

In love I correct thee, thy soul to refine,
 To make thee at length in my likeness to shine.
 The foolish, the fearful, the weak are my care;
 The hopeless, the helpless, I hear their sad prayer,
 From all their afflictions my glory shall spring,
 And the deeper their sorrow, the louder they'll sing.

Why complain when this shall be the case? Farther, is it not an usual exertion of human nature, that a child loves a parent more ardently when he is kept under proper subjection by paternal chastisement? Should then the hidings of your Father's face render you more obedient, should they cause your love towards him to operate more vehemently, sure you will have cause to rejoice because he hath hid his face for a little moment.

DEP. It appears, Elevatus, somewhat strange that one should *rejoice on account of sorrow*. How can this thing be?

ELE. Strange as it may seem, it is however true. Inspiration declares it, and experience adds her suffrage. Of the sons of genuine faith Paul said, they glory in tribulation. And he adds, that to them affliction yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. David said, it was good for me that I was afflicted, before I was afflicted I went astray: Beneficial affliction indeed, which reclaims from wandering in the ways of folly! Our heavenly Father is wise and good, and knoweth best what is suited to our frame. He knows what corruption can bear, and what it cannot. And the height of human wisdom is to yield to heavenly wisdom. By infinite wisdom all the arrangements of our blessings are fixed. He knows what is proper to give under the sun, and what is proper to reserve until we arrive in the heavenly mansion. Why then should not mortals submit to his wise disposal?

DEP. Let not my friend suppose that I quarrel with the ways of God. No, I esteem his ways concerning all things to be wise and good: But may I not *innocent-*

ly complain, when I do not experience the light of his countenance?

ELE. You may complain of yourself, but all complaining of God is sinful. Man ought cheerfully to receive both good and evil at the hand of God. Hath not the potter power over the clay? May not God do with his own as seemeth good unto him? May he not either smile or frown? To some he maketh himself known at his table, and to others he hideth his face. But why should man complain? What does he merit at the hand of God? Nothing. Therefore he ought not to murmur when he is sent away mourning. Nay rather, he ought to rejoice that vengeance hath not been executed, and his blood mingled with his sacrifice.

DEP. Your kind admonitions are acceptable. I shall endeavor silently to bear the chastening of the Lord,—to wait with patience until he be pleased to me to my soul. Perhaps ere long he will come and cause his face to shine upon me, and give me peace.

ELE. He hath promised to do so, and he will fulfil his promise. He hath said, ‘I will hide my face for a little moment: but with everlasting kindness will I return unto you. Sorrow may endure for a night: but joy cometh in the morning.’

THE storm may rage, the floods may swell,
Awak’ning all your fears;
But glorious grace, in raging storms
And floods, still most appears.

Thy covenant God, who call’d thee forth
When thou in bondage lay,
In faithfulness will guard thy steps
Thro’ perils of the way.

Thy clouds, thy pains, thy sorrows deep,
Under his skilful hand
Shall each improve, and lead thee on
Unto the promis’d land

The

The path is try'd, the num'rous host,
That now surround the throne,
Had fears like you, had wounded souls,
And comforters had none.

But by our glorious Shepherd's care,
Thro' all the darksome way,
Safely they pass'd, and wondering came
To everlasting day.

And so shall you and every one possessed of true faith. For whom the Lord loveth he loveth unto the end. All the pardoned he keeps by his Almighty power through *faith* unto salvation. Unreservedly then commit thy way unto the Lord; for though he cause darkness, he will have compassion. Only wait thou upon thy God continually. Though the vision tarry, wait for it, at the appointed time it will speak. Perhaps you shall not have gone much farther in the walk of holiness, when you shall find him whom your soul loveth and fore longeth after. God will fulfil the just desire of those that fear him. May he speedily do so to Depressus.

“ Come then, O my soul, instead of spending time in
“ fruitless lamentations, consider seriously what the present
“ circumstance makes thy duty. Humble thyself
“ deeply before God, and intreat his favor: see if there
“ be any ground of comfort; and labor to improve so
“ sad a disappointment (if possible) to some good purpose.

“ *God be merciful to me a sinner!* I acknowledge
“ my iniquity, and desire to take to myself that shame
“ which is my due; *Against thee, O Lord, have I sinned,*
“ *and thou must be justified when thou speakest, and*
“ *be clear when thou judgest.* There was nothing
“ wanting on thy part; all things were ready: I
“ found a table spread, and a cup flowing.”——

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

BENEVOLUS a Minister, and CIRCUMSPECTUS inquiring how he ought to walk after commemorating the Death of Jesus.

As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

COL. ii. 6.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, nor as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain if the Lord.

I COR. xv. 58.

CIRCUMSPECTUS. **I** HOPE, Sir, you will not be offended for waiting upon you at this time. I have as much need for your advice after, as before the solemn work of communicating. The particular cause of the present trouble I give you, is to enquire in what manner I ought now to conduct myself after this solemnity.

BENEVOLUS. Why, Circumspectus, do you suppose that I deem it any trouble to converse with my hearers about their eternal concerns. Allow me to say, that you pay me but a very small compliment in imagining, that I deem my duty a trouble. Sure when duty is deemed a trouble, it is in danger of being neglected. Believe me, when I assure you, that it gives me no small pleasure to observe you so much concerned about acting a proper and a reasonable part. Retiring thoughtlessly from the solemn service may prove a dangerous
step

step in the walk of life. Nay should this step be taken wrong, it may prove fatal. When one returns from the sacrament, the devouring lion roars against him with tenfold fury. Immediately after the cup, Satan entered into Judas, and instantly going to betray Jesus, he had but a few steps farther to go in order to arrive in the pit of destruction. What a sudden transition took place in the situation of Judas ! At the passover with Jesus in the most honorable and the most holy company in the world. He rises from that company and goes to the chief priests and elders to sell Christ. Next he retires from them and becomes the head of a ruffianous band to go to seize the innocent Jesus. Again he assumes the character of a disciple of Jesus, and approaching him says, ' hail master and kissed him.' Suddenly he reassumes his rank at the head of the cruel band, and delivered Jesus into their hands. In a short time after he becomes the victim of despair, and, instigated by her, stains his hands with his own blood. Next he descends into the region of endless woe, and mingles with the most dishonorable and the most unholy company in the whole universe, and shares in their awful plagues. A sad transition indeed ! A transition of which whosoever heareth ought to beware how they walk after returning from celebrating the dying love of Jesus. And respecting your inquiry, how you are to conduct yourself after this solemnity, it might be replied, that some things are wholly finished with the action of communicating, and some things are not finished until the end of life. The things that——

CIR. My anxiety to be particularly informed concerning every minute circumstance is the cause of my interruption. Pray how do you say that any part of this solemn business is concluded with the act of communicating ? I thought that no part thereof could be terminated until we come to heaven. Are we not commanded *daily* to show forth the death of Christ until he come again ? Are we not commanded, as we have received

received Christ Jesus the Lord, so to walk in him? And is it not said, that he only who endureth unto the end shall be saved?

BEN. Yes, dear friend, all these things are undeniable; nor does any one of them contradict my assertion. You recollect that I did not aver that the whole work of communicating was over at once, but only a part thereof. Is not a public profession of the faith of Christ in shewing forth his death terminated? This very thing, however, lays a foundation for the other parts of this service enduring, as expressed in these passages quoted, even unto the end of life. The idea indicated by a profession of the faith of Christ obviously implies an obligation to live an holy life correspondent to that profession. This line of conduct is strongly enjoined by a consistency of character which is universally respected among men. Nay, whether the Lord's supper be considered as a memorial, an expression of gratitude, or a public profession of faith, it speaks one and the same language to all communicants, *even this*, 'walk no more after your former course in your ignorance: but live soberly, righteously, and godly, adorning in all things the doctrine and gospel of God the Savior.'

CIR. But, dear Sir, there appears nothing very particular in all that you have said; for it must be admitted that all reasonable creatures are naturally bound to be holy and obedient unto their Great Former and Preserver.

BEN. True; conscience will subject herself to no other authority than that of the living God. And it cannot be doubted that every creature is bound to venerate and to adore the Creator. Man only becomes worthy of his rank in creation when he becomes religious. Nor can there be an instance of greater wickedness or perverseness of mind than to imagine, that any reasonable creature is left at liberty either to serve God, or not to serve him, according to his own depraved inclinations.
But

But when one speaks of the obligations which communicating subjects unto, he speaks of that consistency of character, incumbent upon all who profess the faith of Christ. The honor of human nature, and consistency of character call upon all to be obedient to the laws of heaven. The honor of christianity and a similar regularity of conduct call upon every communicant to be particularly careful to keep the commandments of the Most High. True, when one contemplates the kindness of God towards men in conferring existence, reason, health, and the various bounties of Providence, and granting a continuation of these blessings, it must appear very difficult to conceive any additional ties unto holiness. Yet still additional ties there are upon christians. For favors towards a criminal lay him under stronger ties to obey, and to serve his prince. Hence to all believers the additional ties of redemption are added to those of creation and of preservation. Now the plain language of communicating is this, ' Blessed be the Lord ' who hath shewed mercy to my soul. Christ hath redeemed me from the curse of the law being made a ' curse for me. Bless the Lord O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and who healeth all thy diseases.' May I not then ask, dear Circumspectus, is it not easy to perceive that a profession of religion, in this view, enforces in the strongest manner purity of heart and of manners? This is a consecrated feast, and all who come to this feast ought to be consecrated unto the Lord. A consecrated vessel should also be properly prepared; and if ever such a one come unprepared, he may marr his own communion, and offend his God. And respecting that particular way in which, Sir, you ought to conduct yourself after this solemn work, that must be regulated in a great degree by what you have experienced there. Have you been joyful and favored with sensible communion, then you are to be careful to go on your way rejoicing, and at the same time walk
circum-

circumspectly that you lose not the things which you have gained. But should it have been otherwise, then seek until you find him whom your soul loveth. Instead of indulging a sullen inactivity, be more solicitous and active in seeking after Jesus. In the language of the spouse, say, ' I will rise *now*, and go about the city, ' in the streets and in the broad ways, I will seek him ' whom my soul loveth.' Be diligent in the use of all appointed means—meditation, prayer, reading, hearing, and holy conversation, that so you may experience those displays of God's love which you expected at his table. Nor ought you to forget that every murmur should be carefully suppressed. Why should the creature quarrel with the doings of the Creator? Humility and abasement are always becoming a dependent, and particularly a *sinful* dependent.

CIR. Dear Sir, reflecting upon the guilt which mingles with our religious services, we have all need to be humbled before the Lord. Reflecting also upon our unworthy communicating, why do we wonder though we frequently return from this service sorrowful and sad of heart, instead of exulting in God our Savior? I cannot say that my mind is either highly elevated or highly depressed, but I feel a calm serenity of soul, and a holy anxiety to please God more and more, and a resolute determination to walk in all the commandments of God unto the end of life.

BEN. Perhaps my friend could not retire from the table of the Lord in a better frame of mind. When the soul is highly favored, and when God displays what is the exceeding greatness of his love, then the enjoyment is too exquisite and too sublime for humanity long to endure. Yes, such pleasures are too refined for this polluted region. Therefore they are of short duration. And it is easy to conceive that in proportion to our satisfaction in the favor of God, will be our proportionate sorrow upon the withdrawing of his smile. And since he is a God who hideth his face

L

from

from the house of Jacob, elevated enjoyment is usually of short continuance. Such a display of God's love as our faculties can steadily endure may be the best. When God however is graciously pleased to grant nobler displays of his goodness, they are gratefully to be received and properly improved. Therefore great care should be taken that the mind be properly regulated after such singular enjoyment, whether it gradually or more suddenly subside;—that no murmur arise;—that no remissness in duty ensue;—that the mind still pursue hard after God;—that a permanent thirst after fellowship with him during the whole of your existence be carefully cherished in the soul;—supported by believing views of yonder land, where our powers shall be prepared for more exalted displays of glory than we are able to bear in this darkened and enfeebled state.

CIR. Unspeakably happy are all they who shall come to that enjoyment. Then their communion shall be no more partial. No longer shall they see in part: but they shall see Jesus face to face. There communion shall no more be interrupted. O that my steps were directed to that land of eternal consolations!

BEN. In this thou art left at no uncertainty. God himself hath given a sacred volume to guide your wandering steps to glory. In that volume is contained every necessary information concerning how you ought to act and to walk, so as to please God in all things. There our duty to our God, to our fellow creatures, and to our own souls is plainly revealed. Does then Circumspectus wish to act a proper part as a christian, let him search the scriptures. These testify of Jesus, without whom we can do nothing. It is narrated that the Jews rendered thanks unto God for the written law, and so ought also all christians to do for the written gospel; and if we cordially praise God for his written word, we certainly will not be negligent in perusing it. Therefore eagerly embrace every opportunity to obtain

a distinct and accurate acquaintance with this sacred Record. Meditate therein day and night. While employed about your worldly avocations, let your thoughts be occupied about the precious truths of salvation. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. This alone will guard you from error, and guide you in the walk of holiness.

It is pleasant to remark that many of the explicit refutations of error contained in the sacred Record, were occasioned by those which had early appeared in the christian church. The error of the Gnostics in denying the Supreme Divinity of Jesus induced John to write that sublime description of the glorious divinity of Christ in the first chapter of his gospel. The false judaizing teachers induced Paul to write the epistle to the Galatian church, in which so much important information is contained. The errors of the Corinthian church concerning the celebration of the Lord's supper induced Paul to give that ample and explicit information respecting that ordinance which is contained in the eleventh chapter of the first epistle to that church. Thus Satan, notwithstanding all his natural and acquired cunning, often ruins his own cause; for had not these errors been advanced before the days of inspiration ceased, we should not have been so well provided to refute error in after days. Let us then improve our privileges. Labor to acquire accurate conceptions of *the whole of revealed Truth*, and if, Sir, your mind is thus stored with divine information, you shall as it were be constantly searching the scriptures, and be nourishing the mind with *spiritual provision*. In order that the mind may be qualified for this pleasant work it may be of no small advantage to be regular in reading some portion of the word of God morning and evening. Here is an endless store both of pleasure and of improvement to the human mind. The best book that ever was composed by man will upon frequent perusal become dull and in-

spid : but the more that one reads and understands the contents of this book, the more he will admire and love it. This is no small evidence of its divine origin. And a full conviction of this is necessary to their proper regard. All divine information is from the sacred writings. These writings were from the men who were inspired. These were authorised by Christ, and Christ received his commission from the Father to reveal the mind of the Eternal respecting the salvation of men. Thus we are to trace up divine information to its source, that our faith may not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. Nothing less than divine evidence and divine authority can produce a genuine faith. To this truth I hope Circumspectus can bear witness.

CIR. I cannot so explicitly bear witness as I ought. I would, however, humbly hope that this word has been my comfort in the house of mine affliction : and I hope also my delight. But my best moments have been under the preaching of the gospel. By it my heart has been refreshed and animated, and my ways directed.

BEN. Nor, Circumspectus, is this singular. The preaching of the word is the great mean which God hath ordained to nourish his people up unto eternal-life. By it God makes even them his people who were not formerly his people. By it he cheers the hearts of the sorrowful, and strengthens the faith of the weak. By it he raises the dormant powers of the soul to action, and causeth it to increase with all the increase of God. Does then my friend desire to make progress in holiness, forsake not the assembling of thyself with the people of God. Every flourishing christian is regular in his attendance upon the ordinances of divine appointment. He loves the habitation of God's house. He deems one day spent in the tabernacles of grace better than a thousand in the tents of sin.

CIR. I may indeed justly say so, for these have proved refreshing and comforting to my soul. They have stayed and strengthened my heart.

BEN.

BEN. They are happy, my friend, who are guided in the way of duty, for that is always the way of peace : ' great peace have they who love the law of God, and ' nothing shall offend them.' Be then careful in the performance of duty ; let justice, mercy, and faith mark all your transactions with the world. Violate not the laws of humanity. Let your conversation tend to the edifying of those who hear. Be regular in the exercises of devotion. Be zealous for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom and glory among men. In every company let your actions tell them that you are a communicant. In every transaction make it obvious that you are dedicated to the service of God. In every relation in which you may be placed, let the same language be declared. Thus shall you go on, daily shewing forth the death of Christ. Thus shall you evince that you are a christian not merely by profession, but also indeed and in truth. Thus shall you go on from strength unto strength, until you appear before God in Zion.

SIR. Do not, Sir, many believers lose much of the happiness which they might enjoy on earth by their unholy walking ? It is mournful to behold how freely professors indulge in the fashionable amusements of the age. Some are as bent upon vanity and folly as others. They blush not to be seen in the midst of fashionable amusements, although these tend to corrupt the heart and to vitiate the conduct.

BEN. My friend has well said concerning these childish and sinful amusements. When these are considered by cool reason they obviously appear to be fraught with folly and guilt. Therefore they are equally unbecoming a reasonable creature and a christian. Few things have done more injury to religion than *these*. They corrupt the young. They dissipate the vigorous. They squander away many precious moments. But it is unnecessary to say any thing to deter my friend from these, or I would attempt to discover their vile abominations,

and to describe the awful punishments connected with them.

CIR. Too long, Sir, with a fascinating ardor, I attended these places of diversion. But I hope experience will deter me from again mingling in these pastimes. These I found were the chains which held me fast bound in the service of Satan. These destroyed serious impressions as soon as they were made upon my mind. When often I seemed to be turning to the Lord, these drew me back again to the ways of folly and sin. It is truly next to miraculous that any one attending these should become religious, or obtain the land of bliss. Grace is however both powerful and free. But God is also just and holy. Therefore says the scripture, ' without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Men may dream of heaven as they please, but it is all a dream; for no heaven devoid of holiness. And holiness will unquestionably lead one not to frequent these places of sinful amusements. These are not the promoters of holiness. But if it is a truth not to be denied, that without holiness *no possibility* of obtaining eternal life, then it must follow that every amusement ought to be estimated by the effect which it hath upon holiness. The true excellence of pleasure is not perceived when approaching, but when retiring. ' Sin is sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly.' And charity herself, which thinketh no evil must admit, that many a bitter draught of wanton pleasure has been received at the sinful amusements of the age, which prove awful ingredients in the cup of death,—a cup which will be put into every mortal hand. It is appointed unto all men once to die, but after death the judgment. Death is the moment which tries every man's work of what sort it is. Then is the moment to make a proper estimate of fashionable amusements. That which determined me to abandon these destructive follies was a sad scene which I witnessed in the death of an old companion. Many an hour we spent together amidst unhallowed pleasures. We
were

were both intoxicated with the love of the entertainments of the stage. But, ah, in the midst of our wanton career a fatal disease suddenly seized him. In a few days his robust constitution was enfeebled, and the uncommon gayness of his temper was gone. Few young men surpassed him in either. But now his glory was quickly departing from him. He sent an express message requesting me to come and visit him. I went. But O what a sight did I behold! My young friend was become pale, emaciated, and ghastly. Acute pain racking the whole of his body. Every joint, and every nerve shaking. Disease making havock of his constitution and hastening him to the lonely mansion of the grave. His piercing and despairing looks strongly indicated the awful anguish that tortured his mind. When I entered the room double pain and anguish seemed instantly to seize him. In such a manner that my feeble frame can scarcely endure to reflect upon, he addressed me, saying, "Come my dear friend and see the sad end of our folly in *me*. I have sent for you to witness in me the rewards of debauchery and of wanton amusements. Behold what a sad change has taken place in my body. Behold torturing pain rending in pieces my constitution. But this is *nothing* compared to the terrible anguish which afflicts my mind. My conscience brings to remembrance the numerous crimes of my life. O a world for the hours spent in the playhouse, at balls, at card-tables, in the tavern. Oh inexpressible torment when I reflect upon the haunts of uncleanness. Oh how have I squandered away that time in which I should have prepared for *this hour*! Oh dear friend, religion I now see to be no farce. *It is awfully important*. Millions of worlds would I this moment cheerfully give for the existence of religion in my soul, and for the favor of my Judge. But he frowns, and is ready to pronounce upon me the sentence of eternal damnation. Look upon and see how death is dragging me to his tribunal,

“ nal, where nothing awaits me but a certain and fear-
 “ ful sentence. O eternity, eternity ! O an eternity
 “ of endless torments are to be the fruits of my sinful
 “ amusements, and of my contempt of God and of re-
 “ ligion. Ah my strength is gone—my heart is fail-
 “ ing,—my eyes are becoming dim in death,—I can
 “ scarcely speak—O what streams of sweat flow from
 “ my tortured body—O my friend take warning in
 “ me ; reform your life—no longer go on in this course
 “ of impiety, that you may not come into that place of
 “ torments awaiting me in another world. Oh Sir, the
 “ folly of sin—It is bitterness in the latter end.”—He
 was proceeding with those and similar expressions with
 a dismal tone, and with ghastly and despairing looks,
 when—ah poor man—ah once dearly-beloved companion,
 in my very presence he breathed his last, and in the
 hands of despair and death was hurried to the tribunal
 of God, and from hence —

That, Benevolus, was an affecting scene, and God
 blessed it to my soul. Oh that all the lovers of the stage
 and of sinful amusements, and the despisers of that which
 is good, had been the spectators of that scene ! There
 they would have beheld the horrible nature of vice
 painted in lively colors, not by the hand of fancy or
 fiction, but in mournful reality. Since that melancholy
 day these base, destructive amusements have been ab-
 bandoned and abhorred by my soul. Now I have
 learned to seek pleasures from another quarter. The
 return of a holy solemnity affords more pleasure than
 the most admired fashionable amusement.

BEN. This melancholy narrative, Sir, more than a
 written volume teaches the guilt connected with those
 admired follies, and loudly calls upon the young to
 flee such places, as they would those infected with the
 pestilence. There reigns the pestilence which secretly
 destroys immortal souls. These infuse direful ingredi-
 ents into the cup of death. They did so to that poor
 unhappy young man. They will do so to every one
 who

who walks in his footsteps. O that the young would be entreated to take warning ; O that they would consider their latter end—That they would remember that their rational nature and dependent situation—their early dedication to the service of God,—the great kindness of Christ in dying for men,—the danger of sin, and the pleasures of holiness call upon them to abandon the ways of sin, and to make a public profession of their faith in Christ by sitting down at his table ; these also call upon them to have a conversation correspondent to that profession, adorning in all things the doctrine and gospel of God the Savior, that so they may adorn human nature, prove the glory of their country, shining lights in the church here below, and by the operations and guidance of the divine Spirit be prepared for honor, glory, and eternal life.

But I find, Circumspectus, that our present conference must be terminated.

SUFFICIENCY IN CHRIST.

INFINITE wisdom, power, and grace,

In our Redeemer shine ;

Oh ! let me, by a lively faith,

Make these perfections mine.

In this dark world of sin and grief,

My steps I can't direct ;

Nor can I from surrounding foes

My feeble heart protect :

By force, or fraud, they enter here,

And lead my thoughts astray ;

Poor captive ! I forsake my God,

And wander from his way.

This poor diseased, treach'rous heart,

Thus wandering from the road,

All nature's skill can never heal,

Nor turn my face to God.

But since, in thine eternal word,

Wisdom, and pow'r, and grace,

In

In wond'rous love, are there bestow'd
 On mankind's helpless race ;
 Since wretched sinful men, as I,
 The promise have believ'd,
 And hence in ev'ry time of need,
 A fit supply receiv'd ;
 I too will on thy record rest,
 On faithfulness divine,
 For wisdom, pow'r and grace, I'll trust ;
 The promise makes them mine.

SEE, when th' Eternal FATHER speaks,
 The SON obeys the call ;
 " These chosen souls thou shalt redeem ;
 " I will them ransom all."
 Then thro' the heav'ns ten thousand tongues
 Exalt the Savior God ;
 While saints successive spread his name,
 Thro' all the earth abroad.
 Kindly inviting all the day
 The Great Redeemer stands,
 With gracious open heart he speaks
 And stretches forth his hands.
 " Dear guilty souls of ev'ry name,
 " Tho' vile and black as hell,
 " Come taste your own Redeemer's grace,
 " And of his mercy tell :
 " No terms I make, no price I ask,
 " Sinners of mankind, come ;
 " Whate'er you are, whate'er you've been,
 " Here in my heart is room :
 " Harken, ye thoughtless, wand'ring souls,
 " My kind advice receive ;
 " To you I speak, ye trembling hearts
 " Fear not, my grace believe.
 " Your various aggravated sins
 " Were buried in my grave ;
 " I died to expiate your guilt,
 " I live your souls to save."

ON THE DEATH OF FRIENDS.

YE friends and companions dear,
Will ye thus leave me?

When my fond heart rests in you,
Will you deceive me?

O why do ye fly my arms,
Bent to embrace you?

O stay, my best earthly bliss,
Let me possess you.

Ah! no, no, they cannot stay,
Death does bereave me;

See, death calls them fast away,
Oh, how it grieves me!

But have not I others left
Yet to comfort me?

Have not I peace, health and wealth,
Still to support me?

May not I rejoice in these,
Fearless of sorrow;

My passing a pleasing dream,
Now, and to-morrow?

Ah! no, sure it will not do,
These will deceive me;

What time I stand most in need,
These all will leave me.

Cease then, my poor heart, from man,
Cease from the creature;

Hence, cease from all dying things;
Vain is their nature.

To thine everlasting Friend
Haste and betake thee;

In Him I can safely rest,
He'll ne'er forsake me.

Adieu, then, ye dying things,
Ye that so grieve me;

My God, unto whom I fly.
He will receive me.

A SOUL just entered on HEAVEN sings,

WHY was unbelieving I, *Hallelujah!*
Trembling so afraid to die?

Since my feet in safety stand,
Now within the promis'd land,
Oh! what wondrous grace is here!

Now I'm safe from ev'ry fear;
Sin and doubts are ever gone;
Sighing shall no more be known.

Henceforth, neither grief nor pain;
Here successive pleasures reign;
All things our Hosannas raise;

O the glory of this place!

O ye perfect happy ones,

Let me try to join your tunes;

Come let us exalt the LAMB,

Singing ever to his name.

He our full redemption wrought;

He for us this glory bought;

From the earth he call'd us home;

To our Father's house we're come;

Oft in Kedar's tents I tried,

When his lovely face was hid,

With my friends to raise this song;

But it languish'd on my tongue.

JESUS now unveils his face;

Here I shout of sov'reign grace;

Full of love, incessant cry

To his praise in raptures high.

O, my drooping friends below!

Did ye half this glory know,

Daily would ye stretch the wing,

Here to fly, and thus to sing, *Hallelujah!*

FINIS.

